HUMBLE FOLK

By

BOSWORTH CROCKER

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HUMBLE FOLK

BY BOSWORTH CROCKER

Plays:

HUMBLE FOLK
THE LAST STRAW
PAWNS OF WAR

Fiction:

DON JUAN'S WIFE
(*in preparation*)

HUMBLE FOLK

ONE-ACT PLAYS

By

BOSWORTH CROCKER

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1923

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TO JOHN GALSWORTHY

IN GRATITUDE AND ADMIRATION

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INTRODUCTION

Within the past ten years a very considerable literature of one-act plays has been produced in America. Among these one-act plays there have been a few that were genuine and powerful and memorable. But the great mass of these little plays has seemed to me to suffer from a curious lack either of fundamental sincerity or of the ability, on the part of the authors, to project that sincerity in art. I have read literally hundreds of such plays and in most of them there are traces of the merely fantastic, the merely artful, the merely odd and quaint. Excessively few of them have gone to reality as a source, to such folk-life as we have, to such conflicts as that life offers. And this has seemed to me the more deplorable since these one-act plays have been used so largely by the Little Theatre movement in town and country and by clubs and social centres that are far removed from the professional theatre and that are supposed to carry the torch of art which, at its best, is life grown articulate, into dim and remote places.

These plays by Bosworth Crocker have the tang and edge of life, the power and pathos of reality. They, too, deal with the problematic element in human existence. But they do not deal with that element in abstract terms or through the feeble symbolism of the consciously sophisticated. They show character in conflict, character

which *is* action, passion which *is* struggle, circumstance which *is* crisis. Consider the poor janitor wounded in his honor, the tailor's wife struggling toward her humble dream, the seamstress in the throes of impossible motherhood, the prostitute dragged down by what in her is least evil, the proud and fiery Irish girl refusing a repetition of her mother's fate—consider these carefully, and you will come to the conclusion that here is a small body of dramatic work that expresses life directly, that has the priceless quality of bleeding where it is cut, that is full of human voices and human woes.

The book is a very American book. We have no homogeneous folk-life, and here German and Jew and Scandinavian jostle each other, each endowed with the unmistakable characteristics of his motherland and his national tradition, yet each, even the Irish, subtly touched, too, by something that derives from the special conditions, the special problems, the special flavor of our American life. Thus these brief dramatic studies have an instructiveness of which their author, of course, never dreamed, and a peculiar and happy fitness for representation in many parts of the country and among many groups of our diversified people.

These virtues are, to be sure, only the lower and more practical virtues of these five plays. They have their quite independent value as art through their sureness of characterization, their grave simplicity of structure, the racy verisimilitude

and fine compactness of their dialogue. They drive straight and pierce deep. They have both body and savor and notably enrich the very small group of significant native dramas in this form.

LUDWIG LEWISOHN

New York, June 22, 1923.

THE LAST STRAW

Original cast appearing
in the first production by the Washington Square Players
at the Comedy Theatre, New York
February 12th, 1917

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY:

FRIEDRICH BAUER, janitor of the Bryn Mawr. *Arthur E. Hohle*

MIENE, his wife . . . . . *Marjorie Vonnegut*

KARL, elder son, aged ten . . . . . *Nick Long*

FRITZI, younger son, aged seven . . *Frank Longacre*

JIM LANE, a grocer boy . . . . *Glenn Hunter*

TIME: The present day.

SCENE: The basement of a large apartment house in New York City.

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Copyright, 1917, by Frank Shay

THE LAST STRAW

SCENE

The kitchen of the Bauer flat in the basement of the Bryn Mawr. A window at the side gives on an area and shows the walk above and the houses across the street. Opposite the window is a door to an inner room. Through the outer door, in the centre of the back wall, a dumb-waiter and whistles to tenants can be seen. A broken milk-bottle lies in a puddle of milk on the cement floor in front of the dumb-waiter. To the right of the outer door, a telephone; a gas-range on which there are flatirons heating and vegetables cooking. To the left of the outer door is an old sideboard; over it hangs a picture of Bismarck. Near the centre of the room, a little to the right, stands a kitchen table with four chairs around it. An ironing board is placed between the kitchen table and the sink, a basket of dampened clothes under it. A large calendar on the wall. An alarm-clock on the window-sill. Time: a little before noon. The telephone rings, Mrs. Bauer leaves her ironing and goes to answer it.

MRS. BAUER

No, Mr. Bauer's out yet. (*She listens through the transmitter.*) Thank you, Mrs. Mohler. (*Another pause.*) I'll tell him just so soon

he comes in—yes, ma'am. (*Mrs. Bauer goes back to her ironing.*)

(*A grocer boy rushes into the basement, whistling; he puts down his basket, goes up to Mrs. Bauer's door and looks in.*)

LANE
Say—where's the boss?

MRS. BAUER
He'll be home soon, I—hope—Jim. What you want?

(*He stands looking at her with growing sympathy.*)

LANE
Nothin'. Got a rag 'round here? Dumb-waiter's all wet. . . . Lot of groceries for Sawyers.

MRS. BAUER (*without lifting her eyes, mechanically hands him a mop which hangs beside the door*)
Here.

LANE
What's the matter?

MRS. BAUER (*dully*)
Huh?

LANE (*significantly*)
Oh, I know.

MRS. BAUER
What you know?

LANE
About the boss. (*Mrs. Bauer looks distressed.*) Heard your friends across the street talkin'.

MRS. BAUER (*bitterly*)
Friends!

LANE
Rotten trick to play on the boss, all right, puttin' that old maid up to get him pinched.

MRS. BAUER (*absently*)
Was she an old maid?

LANE
The cruelty to animals woman over there (*He waves his hand.*)—regular old crank. Nies* put her up to it all right.

MRS. BAUER
I guess it was his old woman. Nies ain't so bad. She's the one. Because my two boys dress up a little on Sunday, she don't like it.

LANE
Yes, she's sore because the boys told her the boss kicks their dog.

MRS. BAUER
He don't do nothin' of the sort—jus' drives it 'way from the garbage pails—that's all. We coulda had that dog took up long ago—they ain't got no license. But Fritz—he's so easy—he jus' takes it out chasin' the dog and hollerin'.

LANE
That ain't no way. He ought to make the dog holler—good and hard—once; then it'd keep out of here.

MRS. BAUER
Don't you go to talkin' like that 'round my

*Pronounced *niece*.

man. Look at all this trouble we're in on account of a stray cat.

LANE

I better get busy. They'll be callin' up the store in a minute. That woman's the limit. . . . Send up the groceries in that slop, she'd send them down again. High-toned people like her ought to keep maids. (*He mops out the lower shelf of the dumb-waiter, then looks at the broken bottle and the puddle of milk inquiringly.*)

MRS. BAUER (*taking the mop away from him*)

I'll clean that up. I forgot—in all this trouble.

LANE

Whose milk?

MRS. BAUER

The Mohlers'.—That's how it all happened. Somebody upset their milk on the dumb-waiter and the cat was on the shelf lickin' it up; my man, not noticin', starts the waiter up and the cat tries to jump out; the bottle rolls off and breaks. The cat was hurt awful—caught in the shaft. I don't see how it coulda run after that, but it did—right into the street, right into that woman—Fritz after it. Then it fell over. "You did that?" she says to Fritz. "Yes," he says, "I did that." He didn't say no more, jus' went off and then after a while they came for him and— (*She begins to cry softly.*)

LANE

Brace up; they ain't goin' to do anything to

him. . . . (*He comes into kitchen. Hesitatingly*) Say! . . . He didn't kick the cat—did he?

MRS. BAUER

Who said so?

LANE

Mrs. Nies—says she saw him from her window.

MRS. BAUER (*as though to herself*)

I dunno. (*Excitedly.*) Of course he didn't kick the cat. (*Again as though to herself.*) Fritz is so quick-tempered he mighta kicked it 'fore he knew what he was about. No one'd ever know how good Fritz is unless they lived with him. He never hurt no one and nothing except himself.

LANE

Oh, I'm on to the boss. I never mind his hollerin'.

MRS. BAUER

If you get a chance, bring me some butter for dinner—a pound.

LANE

All right. I'll run over with it in ten or fifteen minutes, soon as I get rid of these orders out here in the wagon.

MRS. BAUER

That'll do.

(*She moves about apathetically, lays the cloth on the kitchen table and begins to set it. Lane goes to the dumb-waiter, whistles up the tube, puts the basket of groceries on the shelf of the dumb-waiter, pulls the rope and sends the waiter up.*

Mrs. Bauer continues to set the table. Boys from the street suddenly swoop into the basement and yell.)

CHORUS OF BOYS' VOICES

Who killed the cat! Who killed the cat!

LANE (*letting the rope go and making a dive for the boys*)

I'll show you, you—

(*They rush out. Mrs. Bauer stands despairingly in the doorway shaking her clasped hands.*)

MRS. BAUER

Those are Nies's boys.

LANE

Regular toughs! Call the cop and have 'em pinched if they don't stop it.

MRS. BAUER

If my man hears them—you know—there'll be more trouble.

LANE

The boss ought to make it hot for them.

MRS. BAUER

Such trouble!

LANE (*starts to go*)

Well,—luck to the boss.

MRS. BAUER

There ain't no such thing as luck for us.

LANE

Aw, come on . . .

MRS. BAUER

Everything's against us. First Fritz's mother

dies. We named the baby after her—Trude . . . Then we lost Trude. That finished Fritz. After that he began this hollerin' business. And now this here trouble—just when things was goin' half ways decent for the first time. (*She pushes past him and goes to her ironing.*)

LANE (*shakes his head sympathetically and takes up his basket*)
A pound you said?

MRS. BAUER
Yes.

LANE
All right. (*He starts off and then rushes back.*) Here's the boss comin', Mrs. Bauer. (*He rushes off again.*)

LANE'S VOICE (*cheerfully*)
Hello, there!

BAUER'S VOICE (*dull and strained*)
Hello!

(*Bauer comes in. His naturally bright blue eyes are tired and lustreless; his strong frame seems to have lost all vigor and alertness; there is a look of utter despondency on his face.*)

MRS. BAUER (*closing the door after him*)
They let you off?

BAUER (*with a hard little laugh*)
Yes, they let me off—they let me off with a fine all right.

MRS. BAUER (*aghast*)
They think you did it then.

BAUER (*harshly*)
The judge fined me I tell you.

MRS. BAUER (*unable to express her poignant sympathy*)
Fined you! . . . O Fritz! (*She lays her hand on his shoulder.*)

BAUER (*roughly, to keep himself from going to pieces*)
That slop out there ain't cleaned up yet.

MRS. BAUER
I've been so worried.

BAUER (*with sudden desperation*)
I can't stand it, I tell you.

MRS. BAUER
Well, it's all over now, Fritz.

BAUER
Yes, it's all over . . . it's all up with me.

MRS. BAUER
Fritz!

BAUER
That's one sure thing.

MRS. BAUER
You oughtn't to give up like this.

BAUER (*pounding on the table*)
I tell you I can't hold up my head again.

MRS. BAUER
Why, Fritz?

BAUER
They've made me out guilty. The judge fined me. Fined me, Miene! How is that? Can a man stand for that? The woman said I told her myself—right out—that I did it.

MRS. BAUER

The woman that had you—(*He winces as she hesitates.*) took?

BAUER

Damned——

MRS BAUER (*putting her hand over his mouth*)

Hush, Fritz.

BAUER

Why will I hush, Miene? She said I was proud of the job. (*Passionately raising his voice.*) The damned interferin'——

MRS. BAUER

Don't holler, Fritz. It's your hollerin' that's made all this trouble.

BAUER (*penetrated by her words more and more*)

My hollerin'! . . .

(*The telephone rings; she answers it.*)

MRS. BAUER

Yes, Mrs. Mohler, he's come in now.—Yes. —Won't after dinner do?—All right.—Thank you, Mrs. Mohler. (*She hangs up the receiver.*) Mrs. Mohler wants you to fix her sink right after dinner.

BAUER

I'm not goin' to do any more fixin' around here.

MRS. BAUER

You hold on to yourself, Fritz; that's no way to talk; Mrs. Mohler's a nice woman.

BAUER

I don't want to see no more nice women. (*After a pause.*) Hollerin'!—that's what's the matter

with me—hollerin', eh? Well, I've took it all out in hollerin'.

MRS. BAUER

They hear you and they think you've got no feelings.

BAUER (*in utter amazement at the irony of the situation*)

And I was goin' after the damned cat to take care of it.

MRS. BAUER

Why didn't you tell the judge all about it?

BAUER

They got me rattled among them. The lady was so soft and pleasant—"He must be made to understand, your Honor," she said to the judge, "that dumb animals has feelin's, too, just as well as human beings"—*Me*, Miene,—made to understand that! I couldn't say nothin'. My voice just stuck in my throat.

MRS. BAUER

What's the matter with you? You oughta spoke up and told the judge just how it all happened.

BAUER

I said to myself: I'll go home and put a bullet through my head—that's the best thing for me now.

MRS. BAUER (*with impatient unbelief*)

Ach, Fritz, Fritz!

(*The clatter of feet is heard.*)

CHORUS OF VOICES (*at the outer door*)
Who killed the cat! Who killed the cat!

(*Bauer jumps up, pale and shaken with strange rage; she pushes him gently back into his chair, opens the door, steps out for a moment, then comes in and leaves the door open behind her.*)

BAUER
You see? . . . Even the kids . . . I'm disgraced all over the place.

MRS. BAUER
So long as you didn't hurt the cat—

BAUER
What's the difference? Everybody believes it.

MRS. BAUER
No, they don't, Fritz.

BAUER
You can't fool me, Miene. I see it in their eyes. They looked away from me when I was comin' 'round the corner. Some of them kinder smiled like——(*He passes his hand over his head.*) Even the cop says to me on the way over, yesterday: "Don't you put your foot in it any more'n you have to." You see? He thought I did it all right. Everybody believes it.

MRS. BAUER (*putting towels away*)
Well, then *let* them believe it. . . . The agent don't believe it.

BAUER
I dunno. He'da paid my fine anyhow.

MRS. BAUER
He gave you a good name.

BAUER (*with indignant derision*)
He gave me a good name! . . . Haven't I always kept this place all right since we been here? Afterwards he said to me: "I'm surprised at this business, Bauer, very much surprised." That shows what he thinks. I told him it ain't true, I didn't mean to hurt it. I saw by his eyes he didn't believe me.

MRS. BAUER
Well, don't you worry any more now.

BAUER (*to himself*)
Hollerin'!

MRS. BAUER (*shuts the door*)
Well now holler a little if it does you good.

BAUER
Nothin's goin' to do me good.

MRS. BAUER
You just put it out of your mind. (*The telephone rings. She answers it.*) Yes, but he can't come now, Mrs. McAllister. He'll be up this afternoon. (*She hangs up the receiver.*)

BAUER
And I ain't goin' this afternoon—nowhere.

MRS. BAUER
It's Mrs. McAllister. Somethin's wrong with her refrigerator—the water won't run off she says.

BAUER
They can clean out their own drain pipes.

MRS. BAUER

You go to work and get your mind off this here business.

BAUER (*staring straight ahead of him*)

I ain't goin' 'round among the people in this house . . . to have them lookin' at me . . . disgraced like this.

MRS. BAUER

You want to hold up your head and act as if nothin's happened.

BAUER

Nobody spoke to me at the dumb-waiter when I took off the garbage and paper this morning. Mrs. Mohler always says something pleasant.

MRS. BAUER

You just think that because you're all upset. (*The telephone rings; she goes to it and listens.*) Yes, ma'am, I'll see. Fritz, have you any fine wire? Mrs. McAllister thinks she might try and fix the drain with it—till you come up.

BAUER

I got no wire.

MRS. BAUER

Mr. Bauer'll fix it—right after dinner, Mrs. McAllister. (*Impatiently.*) He can't find the wire this minute—soon's he eats his dinner.

BAUER (*doggedly*)

You'll see. . . .

MRS. BAUER (*soothingly*)

Come now, Fritz, give me your hat. (*She takes his hat from him.*)

VOICES IN THE STREET (*receding from the front area*)
Who killed the cat! Who killed the cat!

(*Bauer rushes toward the window in a fury of excitement.*)

BAUER (*shouting at the top of his voice*)
Verdammte loafers! *Schweine*!

MRS. BAUER (*goes up to him*)
Fritz! Fritz!

BAUER (*collapses and drops into chair*)
You hear 'em.

MRS. BAUER
Don't pay no attention, then they'll get tired.

BAUER
Miene, we must go away. I can't stand it here no longer.

MRS. BAUER
But there's not such another good place, Fritz—And the movin' . . .

BAUER
I say I can't stand it.

MRS. BAUER (*desperately*)
It . . . it would be just the same any other place.

BAUER
Just the same?

MRS. BAUER
Yes, something'd go wrong anyhow.

BAUER
You think I'm a regular Jonah. (*He shakes his*

head repeatedly in the affirmative, as though wholly embracing her point of view.)

MRS. BAUER

Folks don't get to know you. They hear you hollerin' 'round and they think you beat the children and kick the dogs and cats.

BAUER

Do I ever lick the children when they don't need it?

MRS. BAUER

Not Fritzi.

BAUER

You want to spoil Karl. I just touch him with the strap once, a little—like this (*he illustrates with a gesture*) to scare him and he howls like hell.

MRS. BAUER

Yes, and then he don't mind you no more because he knows you don't mean it.

BAUER (*to himself*)

That's the way it goes . . . a man's own wife and children . . .

MRS. BAUER (*attending to the dinner. Irritably*)

Fritz, if you would clean that up out there—and Mrs. Carroll wants her waste-basket. You musta forgot to send it up again.

BAUER

All right.

(*He goes out and leaves the door open. She stands her flatiron on the ledge of the range to cool and puts her ironing board away, watching him at the*

dumb-waiter while he picks up the glass and cleans up the milk on the cement floor. He disappears for a moment, then he comes in again, goes to the drawer and takes out rags and a bottle of polish.)

MRS. BAUER (*pushing the clothes-basket out of the way*)
This ain't cleanin day, Fritz.

BAUER (*dully, putting the polish back into the drawer*)
That's so.

MRS. BAUER (*comforting him*)
You've got to eat a good dinner and then go upstairs and fix that sink for Mrs. Mohler and the drain for Mrs. McAllister.

BAUER (*in a tense voice*)
I tell you I can't stand it. . . . I tell you, Miene. . . .

MRS. BAUER
What now, Fritz?

BAUER
People laugh in my face. (*He nods in the direction of the street.*) Frazer's boy standin' on the stoop calls his dog away when it runs up to me like it always does.

MRS. BAUER
Dogs know better'n men who's good to them.

BAUER
He acted like he thought I'd kick it.

MRS. BAUER
You've got all kinds of foolishness in your head now . . . You sent up Carroll's basket?

BAUER
No.

MRS. BAUER
Well—(*She checks herself.*)

BAUER
All right. (*He gets up.*)

MRS. BAUER
It's settin' right beside the other dumb-waiter. (*He goes out.*) O Gott!——O Gott! —O Gott!

(*Enter Karl and Fritzi. Fritzi is crying.*)

MRS. BAUER (*running to them*)
What's the matter? (*She hushes them and carefully closes the door.*)

KARL
The boys make fun of us; they mock us.

FRITZI
They mock us—"Miau! Miau!" they cry, and then they go like this—(*Fritzi imitates kicking and breaks out crying afresh.*)

MRS. BAUER
Hush, Fritzi, you mustn't let your father hear.

FRITZI
He'd make them shut up.

KARL
I don't want to go to school this afternoon. (*He doubles his fists.*)

MRS. BAUER (*turning on him fiercely*)
Why not? (*In an undertone.*) You talk that way before your little brother.—Have you no sense?

FRITZI (*beginning to whimper*)
I d-d-d-ont want to go to school this afternoon.

MRS. BAUER
You just go 'long to school and mind your own business.

KARL AND FRITZI (*together*)
But the boys. . . .

MRS. BAUER
They ain'ta goin' to keep it up forever. Don't you answer them. Just go 'long together and pay no attention.

KARL
Then they get fresher and fresher.

FRITZI (*echoing Karl*)
Yes, then they get fresher and fresher.

(*Mrs. Bauer begins to take up the dinner. The sound of footfalls just outside the door is heard.*)

MRS. BAUER
Go on now, hang up your caps and get ready for your dinners.

FRITZI
I'm going to tell my papa. (*He goes to inner door.*)

MRS. BAUER
For God's sake, Fritzi, shut up. You mustn't tell no one. Papa'd be disgraced all over.

KARL (*coming up to her*)
Disgraced?

MRS. BAUER
Hush!

KARL
Why disgraced?

MRS. BAUER
Because there's liars, low-down snoopin' liars in the world.

KARL
Who's lied, Mama?

MRS. BAUER
The janitress across the street.

KARL
Mrs. Nies?

FRITZI (*calling out*)
Henny Nies is a tough.

MRS. BAUER (*looking toward the outer door anxiously and shaking her head threateningly at Fritzi*)
I give you somethin', if you don't stop hollerin' out like that.

KARL
Who'd she lie to?

MRS. BAUER
Never mind. Go 'long now. It's time you begin to eat.

KARL
What'd she lie about?

MRS. BAUER (*warningly*)
S-s-sh! Papa'll be comin' in now in a minute.

KARL
It was Henny Nies set the gang on to us. I coulda licked them all if I hadn't had to take care of Fritzi.

MRS. BAUER

You'll get a lickin' all right if you don't keep away from Henny Nies.

KARL

Well—if they call me names—and say *my* father's been to the station-house for killing a cat . . .?

FRITZI

Miau! Miau! Miau!

MRS. BAUER

Hold your mouth.

FRITZI (*swaggering*)

My father never was in jail—was he, Mama?

KARL

Course not.

MRS. BAUER (*to Fritzi*)

Go, wash your hands, Fritzi. (*She steers him to the door of the inner room and he makes his exit.*)

MRS. BAUER (*distressed*)

Karl . . .

KARL (*turning to his mother*)

Was he, Mama?

MRS. BAUER

Papa don't act like he used to. Sometimes I wonder what's come over him. Of course, it's enough to ruin any man's temper, all the trouble we've had.

CHORUS OF VOICES (*from the area by the window*)

Who killed the cat! Who killed the cat!

(*There is the sound of feet clattering up the area steps. Fritzi rushes in, flourishing a revolver.*)

FRITZI

I shoot them, Mama.

MRS. BAUER (*grabbing the revolver*)

Mein Gott! Fritzi! Papa's pistol! (*She examines it carefully.*) You ever touch that again and I'll . . . (*She menaces him.*)

FRITZI (*sulkily*)

I'll save up my money and buy me one.

MRS. BAUER (*smiling a little to herself*)

I see you buyin' one. (*She carries the revolver into the inner room.*)

FRITZI (*in a loud voice and as though shooting at Karl*)

Bang! Bang! Bang! (*Karl strikes at Fritzi; Fritzi dodges.*)

MRS. BAUER (*coming out*)

You wash your dirty hands and face this minute—d'you hear me?

FRITZI (*looking at his hands*)

That's ink stains. I got the highest mark in spelling today. Capital H-e-n-n-y, capital N-i-e-s—Henny Nies, a bum. (*Mrs. Bauer makes a rush at him and he runs back into the inner room.*)

KARL (*sitting down beside the table*)

Do we have to go to school this afternoon?

MRS. BAUER

You have to do what you always do.

KARL

Can't we stay home. . . .

MRS. BAUER (*fiercely*)

Why? Why?

KARL (*sheepishly*)
I ain't feelin' well.

MRS. BAUER
Karlchen! . . . *sham' dich!*

KARL
Till the boys forget. . . .

MRS. BAUER
Papa'd know somethin' was wrong right away. That'd be the end. You mustn't act as if anything was different from always.

KARL (*indignantly*)
Sayin' *my* father's been to jail!

MRS. BAUER
Karl . . .

KARL
Papa'd make them stop.

MRS. BAUER (*panic-stricken*)
Karl, don't you tell Papa nothing.

KARL
Not tell Papa?

MRS. BAUER
No.

KARL
Why not tell Papa?

MRS. BAUER
Because——

KARL
Yes, Mama?

MRS. BAUER
Because he *was* arrested yesterday.

KARL (*shocked*)
What for, Mama? Why was he——

MRS. BAUER
For nothing. . . . It was all a lie.

KARL
Well—what was it, Mama?

MRS. BAUER
The cat got hurt in the dumb-waiter—Papa didn't mean to—then they saw Papa chasin' it—then it died.

KARL
Why did Papa chase it?

MRS. BAUER
To see how it hurt itself.

KARL
Whose cat?

MRS. BAUER
The stray cat.

KARL
The little black cat? Is Blacky dead?

MRS. BAUER
Yes, he died on the sidewalk.

KARL
Where was we?

MRS. BAUER
You was at school.

KARL
Papa didn't want us to keep Blacky.

MRS. BAUER
So many cats and dogs around. . . .

FRITZI (*wailing at the door*)
Blacky was my cat.

MRS. BAUER
S-s-h! What do you know about Blacky?

FRITZI
I was listening. Why did Papa kill Blacky?

MRS. BAUER
Hush!

FRITZI
Why was Papa took to jail?

MRS. BAUER
Fritzi! If Papa was to hear. . . . (*She goes out.*)

FRITZI (*sidling up to Karl*)
Miau! Miau!

KARL
You shut up that. Didn't Mama tell you.

FRITZI
When I'm a man I'm going to get arrested. I'll shoot Henny Nies.

KARL (*contemptuously*)
Yes, you'll do a lot of shooting.

(*Fritzi punches Karl in the back.*)

KARL (*striking at Fritzi*)
You're as big a tough as Henny Nies.

FRITZI (*proud of this alleged likeness*)
I'm going to be a man just like my father; I'll holler and make them stand around.

KARL (*with conviction*)
What you need is a good licking.

(*The telephone rings, Karl goes to it.*)

KARL
No, ma'am, we're just going to eat now.

FRITZI (*sits down beside the table*)
Blacky was a nice cat; she purred just like a steam engine.

KARL
Mama told you not to bring her in.

FRITZI
Papa said I could.

(*There is the sound of footfalls. Bauer and his wife come in and close the door behind them.*)

MRS. BAUER (*putting the dinner on the table*)
Come children. (*To Bauer*) Sit down, Fritz.

(*She serves the dinner. Karl pulls Fritzi out of his father's chair and pushes him into his own; then he takes his place next to his mother.*)

MRS. BAUER (*to Bauer, who sits looking at his food*)
Eat somethin', Friedrich. (*She sits down.*)

BAUER
I can't eat nothin'. I'm full up to here. (*He touches his throat.*)

MRS. BAUER
If you haven't done nothin' wrong, why do you let it worry you so?

(*The children are absorbed in eating.*)

FRITZI (*suddenly*)
Gee, didn't Blacky like liver!

(*Mrs. Bauer and Karl look at him warningly.*)

MRS. BAUER (*fiercely*)
You eat your dinner.

BAUER (*affectionately, laying his hand on Fritzi's arm*)
Fritzi.

FRITZI (*points toward the inner room*)
I'm going to have a gun, too, when I'm a man.

(*Bauer follows Fritzi's gesture and falls to musing. There is a look of brooding misery on his face. Karl nudges Fritzi warningly and watches his father furtively. Bauer sits motionless, staring straight ahead of him.*)

MRS. BAUER (*to Bauer*)
Now drink your coffee.

BAUER
Don't you see, Miene, don't you see? . . . Nothing makes it right now; no one believes me —no one.

MRS. BAUER
What do you care if you didn't do it.

BAUER
I care like hell.

MRS. BAUER (*with a searching look at her husband*)
Fritzi, when you go on like this, people won't believe you didn't do it. You ought to act like you don't care . . . (*She fixes him with a beseeching glance.*) if you *didn't* do it.

(*Bauer looks at his wife as though a hidden meaning to her words had suddenly bitten into his mind.*)

BAUER (*aloud to himself*)
A man can't stand that. I've gone hungry.

. . . I've been in the hospital . . . I've worked when I couldn't stand up hardly. . .

MRS. BAUER (*coaxingly*)
Drink your coffee, drink it now, Fritz, while it's hot.

(*He tries to swallow a little coffee and then puts down the cup.*)

BAUER
I've never asked favors of no man.

MRS. BAUER
Well, an' if you did . . .

BAUER
I've always kept my good name. . . .

MRS. BAUER
If a man hasn't done nothin' wrong, it don't matter. Just go ahead like always—if——

BAUER (*muttering*)
If—if—

MRS. BAUER (*to the boys*)
Get your caps now, it's time to go to school.

(*Karl gets up, passes behind his father and beckons to Fritzi to follow him.*)

FRITZI (*keeping his seat*)
Do we have to go to school?

BAUER (*suddenly alert*)
Why, what's the matter?

FRITZI
The boys——

MRS. BAUER (*breaking in*)
Fritzi!

(*The boys go into the inner room. Bauer collapses again.*)

MRS. BAUER (*looking at him strangely*)
Fritz—if you didn't . . .

BAUER
I can't prove nothing—and no one believes me. (*A pause. She is silent under his gaze.*) No one! (*He waits for her to speak. She sits with averted face. He sinks into a dull misery. The expression in his eyes changes from beseeching to despair as her silence continues, and he cries out hoarsely.*) No one! Even if you kill a cat—what's a cat against a man's life!

MRS. BAUER (*tensely, her eyes fastened on his*)
But you *didn't* kill it? (*A pause.*)

MRS. BAUER (*in a low appealing voice*)
Did you, Fritz? Did you?

(*Bauer gets up slowly. He stands very still and stares at his wife.*)

KARL'S VOICE
Mama, Fritzi's fooling with Papa's gun.

(*Both children rush into the room.*)

KARL
You oughta lock it up.

MRS. BAUER (*to Fritzi*)
Bad boy! (*To Karl*) Fritzi wants to kill himself—that's what. Go on to school.

(*Boys run past the area.*)

VOICES

Who killed the cat! Who killed the cat!

(*At the sound of the voices the boys start back. Instinctively Mrs. Bauer lays a protecting hand on each. She looks around at her husband with a sudden anxiety which she tries to conceal from the children who whisper together. Bauer rises heavily to his feet and walks staggeringly toward the inner room.*)

MRS. BAUER (*in a worried tone as she pushes the children out*)

Go on to school.

(*At the threshold of the inner room, Bauer stops, half-turns back with distorted features, and then hurries in. The door slams behind him. Mrs. Bauer closes the outer door, turns, takes a step as though to follow Bauer, hesitates, then crosses to the kitchen table and starts to clear up the dishes. The report of a revolver sounds from the inner room. Terror-stricken, Mrs. Bauer rushes off into the room.*)

MRS. BAUER'S VOICE

Fritz! Fritz! Speak to me! Look at me, Fritz! You didn't do it, Fritz! I know you didn't do it! (*Sound of low sobbing . . .*)

After a few seconds the telephone bell . . . . It rings continuously while the

CURTAIN
slowly falls.

THE BABY CARRIAGE

Original cast appearing in the first production by the Provincetown Players.

MRS. LEZINSKY	*Dorothy Miller*
MRS. ROONEY	*Alice Rostetter*
MR. ROSENBLOOM	*W. Clay Hill*
SOLOMON LEZINSKY	*O. K. Liveright*

PLACE: The Lezinsky Tailor Shop.

TIME: Today.

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THE BABY CARRIAGE

SCENE

An ordinary tailor shop two steps down from the sidewalk. There is a mirror on one side. The equipment is third rate. Mrs. Solomon Lezinsky, alone in the shop, is examining a pair of torn trousers as Mrs. Rooney comes in. Mrs. Lezinsky is 27 years old, medium height and weight, dark, attractive.

MRS. LEZINSKY (*in a pleased voice with a slight Yiddish accent*)
Mrs. Rooney!

MRS. ROONEY (*30 years old—a plump and pretty Irish woman*)
I only ran in for a minute to bring you these—(*She holds up a pair of roller skates and a picture book.*) Eileen's out there in the carriage.

(*Both women look out at the baby carriage in front of the window.*)

MRS. LEZINSKY
Bring her in, Mrs. Rooney. Such a beautiful child—your Eileen!

MRS. ROONEY
Can't stop. Where's the kids?

MRS. LEZINSKY
The janitress takes them to the moving pictures with her Izzie.

MRS. ROONEY

You wouldn't believe the things I've run across this day, packing. (*She puts down the skates.*) I'm thinking these skates'll fit one of your lads. My Mickey—God rest his soul!—used to tear around great on them.

MRS. LEZINSKY

Fine, Mrs. Rooney! (*She examines the skates.*) But couldn't you save them for Eileen?

MRS. ROONEY

Sure, she'd be long growing up to them and they be laying by gathering the rust.

MRS. LEZINSKY

My David and Julius and Benny could die for joy with these fine skates, I tell you, Mrs. Rooney.

MRS. ROONEY

Here's an old book (*She hands Mrs. Lezinsky the book*) but too good to throw away entirely.

MRS. LEZINSKY (*opens the book*)

Fine, Mrs. Rooney! Such a book with pictures in it! My Benny's wild for picture books. Julius reads, reads—always learning. Something wonderful, I tell you. Just like the papa —my Solly ruins himself with his nose always stuck in the Torah.

MRS. ROONEY

The Toro? 'Tis a book I never heard tell of.

MRS. LEZINSKY

The law and the prophets—my Solly was meant to be a rabbi once.

MRS. ROONEY
A rabbi?

MRS. LEZINSKY
You know what a rabbi is by us, Mrs. Rooney?

MRS. ROONEY
Indeed, I know what a rabbi is, Mrs. Lezinsky —a rabbi is a Jewish priest.

MRS. LEZINSKY
You don't hate the Jewish religion, Mrs. Rooney?

MRS. ROONEY
Every one has a right to their own religion. Some of us are born Jewish—like you, Mrs. Lezinsky, and some are born Catholics, like me.

MRS. LEZINSKY
Catholics like you are fine, Mrs. Rooney. Such a good neighbor! A good customer, too! Why should you move away now, Mrs. Rooney?

MRS. ROONEY
The air in the Bronx will be fine for Eileen. 'Tis a great pity you couldn't be moving there, yourself. With the fresh air and the cheap rent, 'twould be great for yourself and the boys—not to mention the baby that's coming to you.

MRS. LEZINSKY
Thank God, that don't happen for a little while yet. But in the hottest weather—maybe—some Septembers—even so late yet—ain't it, Mrs. Rooney? Always trouble by us. Such expense, too. The agent takes the rent today. With Solly's eyes so bad, it's a blessing when we can pay the rent even. And the gas

bills! So much pants pressing! See? They send us this already. (*She shows a paper.*) A notice to pay right away or they shut it off. Only ten days overdue. Would you believe it, Mrs. Rooney? Maybe we catch up a little next month. It don't pay no longer, this business. And soon now another mouth to feed, and still my Solly sticks by his learning.

MRS. ROONEY

But he can't be a rabbi now, can he?

MRS. LEZINSKY

He can't be a rabbi now, no more, Mrs. Rooney, but such a pious man—my Solly. He must be a poor tailor, but he never gives up his learning—not for anything he gives that up! Learning's good for my Julius and Benny and David soon, but it's bad for my Solly. It leaves him no eyes for the business, Mrs. Rooney.

MRS. ROONEY

And are the poor eyes as bad as ever?

MRS. LEZINSKY

How should his eyes get better when he gives them no chance? Always he should have an operation, and the operation—it don't help—maybe. (*Mrs. Rooney turns to the door.*) Must you go so quick, Mrs. Rooney? Now you move away, I never see you any more.

MRS. ROONEY

Sure, the subway runs in front of the house.

MRS. LEZINSKY

I tell you something, Mrs. Rooney; Solly couldn't keep the shop open without me.

Sometimes his eyes go back on him altogether. And he should get an operation. But that costs something, I tell you, Mrs. Rooney. The doctors get rich from that. It costs something, that operation. And then, sometimes, maybe it don't help.

MRS. ROONEY

'Tis too bad, altogether. (*She looks at the baby carriage.*) Wait a minute, Mrs. Lezinsky. (*She starts out.*)

MRS. LEZINSKY (*as Mrs. Rooney goes*)

What is it, Mrs. Rooney?

MRS. ROONEY (*just outside the door, calls out*)

Something else—I forgot. 'Tis out here in the carriage.

(*Mrs. Lezinsky threads a needle and begins to sew buttons on a lady's coat. Mrs. Rooney comes back carrying a small, square package wrapped in a newspaper.*)

MRS. ROONEY

Here's something. You'll like this, Mrs. Lezinsky. It belonged to Eileen.

MRS. LEZINSKY (*looking out at the child in the carriage*)

Was the collar stitched all right, Mrs. Rooney?

MRS. ROONEY

It was that. Fits her coat perfect. See the new cap on her? 'Twas for her birthday I bought it. Three years old now. Getting that big I can feel the weight of her.

MRS. LEZINSKY

Such a beautiful little girl, Mrs. Rooney! And such stylish clothes you buy for her. My David should have a new suit from his papa's right away now. Then we fix the old one over for Julius. Maybe my Benny gets a little good out of that suit too, sometime. We couldn't afford to buy new clothes. We should first get all the wear out of the old ones. Yes, Mrs. Rooney! Anyhow, boys! It don't so much matter. But girls! Girls is different. And such a beautiful little girl like Eileen!

MRS. ROONEY

She'll be spoilt on me entirely—everyone giving her her own way. (*In a gush of mother-pride.*) 'Tis the darling she is—anyhow.

MRS. LEZINSKY

O, Mrs. Rooney, I could wish to have one just like her, I tell you, such a beautiful little girl just like her.

MRS. ROONEY

Maybe you will, Mrs. Lezinsky, maybe you will.

MRS. LEZINSKY

She sleeps nice in that baby carriage.

MRS. ROONEY

'Tis the last time she sleeps in it.

MRS. LEZINSKY

The last time, what?

MRS. ROONEY

Her pa'll be after buying me a go-cart for her now we're moving. 'Tis destroying me—the hauling that up and down stairs.

MRS. LEZINSKY

Such a gorgeous baby carriage—all fresh painted —white—

MRS. ROONEY

It's fine for them that likes it. As for me—I'm that tired of dragging it, I'd rather be leaving it behind.

MRS. LEZINSKY (*her face aglow*)

What happens to that carriage, Mrs. Rooney?

MRS. ROONEY

I'll be selling it.

MRS. LEZINSKY

Who buys that carriage, Mrs. Rooney?

MRS. ROONEY

More than one has their eye on it, but I'll get my price. Mrs. Cohen has spoke for it.

MRS. LEZINSKY

How much you ask for that carriage, Mrs. Rooney?

MRS. ROONEY

Sure, and I'd let it go for a five-dollar bill, Mrs. Lezinsky.

MRS. LEZINSKY (*her face falling*)

Maybe you get that five dollars, Mrs. Rooney. Those Cohens make money by that stationery business.

MRS. ROONEY

And sure, the second-hand man would pay me as much.

MRS. LEZINSKY (*longingly*)

My David and Julius and Benny—they never had such a baby carriage—in all their lives

they never rode in a baby carriage. My babies was pretty babies, too. And smart, Mrs. Rooney! You wouldn't believe it. My Benny was the smartest of the lot. When he was eighteen months old he put two words together. already.

MRS. ROONEY

He's a keener—that one. (*She unwraps the package.*) I'm clean forgetting the basket. (*She holds it out to Mrs. Lezinsky's delighted eye.*) Now there you are—as good as new—Mrs. Lezinsky—and when you do be sticking the safety pins into the cushion— (*She points out the cushion.*) you can mind my Eileen. Some of the pinholes is rusty like, but the pins'll cover it—that it was herself gave your baby her first present.

MRS. LEZINSKY

O, Mrs. Rooney, such a beautiful basket! Such a beautiful, stylish basket!

MRS. ROONEY

And here's a box for the powder. (*She opens a celluloid box and takes out a powder puff.*) And here's an old puff. Sure the puff will do, if you're not too particular.

MRS. LEZINSKY (*handling the things*)

Why should I be so particular? In all their lives my David and Julius and Benny never had such a box and puff, I tell you, Mrs. Rooney.

MRS. ROONEY (*pointing*)

Them little pockets is to stick things in.

MRS. LEZINSKY

Should you give away such a basket. Mrs. Rooney?

MRS. ROONEY

What good is it but to clutter up the closet, knocking about in my way.

MRS. LEZINSKY

My David and Julius and Benny, they never had such a basket, but my cousin, Morris Schapiro's wife—she had such a basket—for her baby. All lined with pink it was.

MRS. ROONEY

Pink is for boys. I wanted a girl, having Mickey then.

MRS. LEZINSKY

Me, too, Mrs. Rooney. Three boys! Now it's time it should be a little girl. Yes, Mrs. Roonev. A little girl like Eileen.

MRS. ROONEY

Sure, then if you're going by the basket, 'tis a little girl you have coming to you. Blue's for girls . . . A comb and a brush for it—you can buy.

MRS. LEZINSKY

Combs and brushes! What should I do with combs and brushes? My David and Julius and Benny are all born bald.

MRS. ROONEY

Sure, Eileen had the finest head of curls was ever seen on a baby—little soft yellow curls—like the down on a bird.

MRS. LEZINSKY

If I should have a little girl—like your Eileen—my David and Julius and Benny—they die for joy over their little sister, I tell you, Mrs. Rooney. Yes, it should be a girl and I name her Eileen. Such pretty names for girls: Eileen and Hazel and Gladys and Goldie. Goldie's a pretty name, too. I like that name so much I call myself Goldie when I go to school. Gietel's my Jewish name. Ugly? Yes, Mrs. Rooney? Goldie's better—much better. But Eileen's the best of all. Eileen's a gorgeous name. I name her Eileen, I do assure you. She should have another name, too, for Solly. Zipporah, maybe, for her dead grandmother.

MRS. ROONEY

Sure, Eileen has a second name: Bridget. 'Tis for my mother in the old country. A saint's name. Her father chose it for her. Bridget's a grand name—that—too.

MRS. LEZINSKY

Zipporah—that was Solly's mother . . . But I *call* her Eileen.

MRS. ROONEY

That's a grand compliment, Mrs. Lezinsky, and 'tis myself should stand godmother for her, should you be wanting me to.

MRS. LEZINSKY

I'm sorry, Mrs. Rooney, by our religion we don't have such godmothers.

MRS. ROONEY

I'll be running on now not to keep you from your work, and so much of it with your poor

man and the drops in his sick eyes. Here! (*She puts half a dollar into Mrs. Lezinsky's hand.*)

MRS. LEZINSKY

For what?

MRS. ROONEY

For Mr. Lezinsky stitching the collar on Eileen's coat.

MRS. LEZINSKY (*trying to make Mrs. Rooney take it back*)

Mrs. Rooney—if you wouldn't insult me—please—when you bring all these lovely things. (*Mrs. Rooney pushes the money away.*) And so you sell that fine baby carriage . . . That carriage holds my Benny, too, maybe?

MRS. ROONEY

Sure. Easy.

MRS. LEZINSKY

My David and Julius—they could wheel that carriage. The little sister sleeps in it. And my Benny—he rides at the foot. Five dollars is cheap for that elegant carriage when you should happen to have so much money. I ask my Solly. Do me the favor, Mrs. Rooney—you should speak to me first before you give it to Mrs. Cohen—yes?

MRS. ROONEY

Sure I will. I'll be leaving the carriage outside and carry the child up. You and Mr. Lezinsky can be making up your minds. (*Mrs. Rooney looks through the window at a man turning in from the street.*) Is it himself coming home?

MRS. LEZINSKY
Any time now, Mrs. Rooney, he comes from the doctor.

MRS. ROONEY
'Tis not himself. 'Tis some customer.

MRS. LEZINSKY (*as the door opens*)
It's Mr. Rosenbloom.

MRS. ROONEY
See you later. (*She rushes out.*)

(*Through the window Mrs. Lezinsky watches her take the child out of the carriage.*)

MRS. LEZINSKY (*sighs, turns to her customer*)
O, Mr. Rosenbloom! Glad to see you, Mr. Rosenbloom. You well now, Mr. Rosenbloom?

MR. ROSENBLOOM
Able to get around once more, Mrs. Lezinsky.

MRS. LEZINSKY
I hope you keep that way. You got thinner with your sickness. You lose your face, Mr. Rosenbloom. (*He hands her a coat and a pair of trousers.*) Why should you bother to bring them in? I could send my David or Julius for them.

MR. ROSENBLOOM
Right on my way to the barber shop. The coat's a little loose now. (*He slips off his coat and puts on the other.*) Across the back. See?

MRS. LEZINSKY
He should take it in a little on the shoulders, Mr. Rosenbloom?

MR. ROSENBLOOM (*considers*)
It wouldn't pay—so much alterations for this particular suit.

MRS. LEZINSKY
It's a good suit, Mr. Rosenbloom.

MR. ROSENBLOOM
He should just shorten the sleeves. Those sleeves were from the first a little too long.

(*He slips the coat off. Mrs. Lezinsky measures the coat sleeve against his bent arm.*)

MRS. LEZINSKY
About how much, Mr. Rosenbloom? Say—an inch?

MR. ROSENBLOOM
An inch or an inch and a half—maybe.

MRS. LEZINSKY (*measures again*)
I think that makes them too short, Mr. Rosenbloom. One inch is plenty.

MR. ROSENBLOOM
All right—one inch, then.

MRS. LEZINSKY
One inch . . . All right, Mr. Rosenbloom—one inch.

MR. ROSENBLOOM
How soon will they be ready?

MRS. LEZINSKY
Maybe tomorrow. He lets all his other work go—maybe—and sets to work on them right away when he gets back home.

MR. ROSENBLOOM
All right.

MRS. LEZINSKY

I send my David or Julius with them, Mr. Rosenbloom.

MR. ROSENBLOOM

I'll stop in the evening and try the coat on.

MRS. LEZINSKY

Maybe it wouldn't be ready to try on so soon—All right, Mr. Rosenbloom, this evening you come in. (*She calls after him as he goes out.*) O, Mr. Rosenbloom! The pants? What should he do to the pants?

MR. ROSENBLOOM (*from the doorway*)

Press them. (*He turns back.*) Press—the whole thing—suit.

MRS. LEZINSKY

Press them. Sure. Press the suit. A fine suit. Certainly a fine piece of goods, Mr. Rosenbloom. Did my husband make it up for you?

MR. ROSENBLOOM

Yes.

MRS. LEZINSKY

I thought so. Wears like iron, too, this goods. Yes, Mr. Rosenbloom? With one eye my husband picks the best piece of goods, I tell you, Mr. Rosenbloom . . . He should shorten the sleeves one inch . . . All right, he fixes it to your satisfaction, Mr. Rosenbloom—

MR. ROSENBLOOM

Yes, yes. (*Impatiently he edges toward the door.*)

MRS. LEZINSKY

This evening you come for them?

(*He nods and hurries out.*)

MRS. LEZINSKY

Five dollars! (*She drops everything and stands looking dreamily through the shop window at the baby carriage. She takes a roll of money from her bosom and counts it; shakes her head dispiritedly and sighs. She makes an estimate of the money coming in from the work on hand. Pointing to Mr. Rosenbloom's suit.*) Two dollars for that—(*She turns from the suit to a pair of torn trousers.*) Half a dollar, anyhow—(*She points to the lady's coat on which she has been sewing buttons.*) A dollar—maybe —(*She hears someone coming, and thrusts the roll of money back into her bosom.*)

(*Mr. Lezinsky comes in. Spare. Medium height. Pronounced Semitic type. He wears glasses with very thick lenses.*)

MR. LEZINSKY

Where are the children?

MRS. LEZINSKY

Mrs. Klein takes them to the moving-pictures with her Izzie.

MR. LEZINSKY

Always to the moving-pictures! The children go blind, too, pretty soon.

MRS. LEZINSKY

The doctor didn't make your eyes no better, Solly?

LEZINSKY

How should he make them better when he says all the time: "Don't use them!" And all the

time a man must keep right on working to put bread in the mouths of his children. And soon, now, another one comes—*nebbich!*

MRS. LEZINSKY

Maybe your eyes get much better now when our little Eileen comes.

LEZINSKY

Better a boy, Goldie: that helps more in the business.

MRS. LEZINSKY

It's time our David and Julius and Benny should have a little sister now. They like that. Such another little girl like Mrs. Rooney's Eileen. When it is, maybe, a girl, we call her Eileen—like Mrs. Rooney's Eileen. Such a gorgeous name—that Eileen! Yes, Solly?

LEZINSKY

Eileen! A *Goy* name! She should be Rebecca for your mother or Zipporah for mine.

MRS. LEZINSKY

Sure. Zipporah, too, Solly—Eileen Zipporah! When there should be sometime—another boy, Solly, then you name him what you like; when it's a little girl—Eileen. I dress her up stylish. Such beautiful things they have in Gumpertz's window. And—Mrs. Rooney sells her baby carriage. (*Both look out at the carriage.*) She gives it away.

LEZINSKY

She gives you a baby carriage?

MRS. LEZINSKY

For five dollars she gives me that lovely carriage good as new—all fresh painted white—

and the little Eileen Zipporah sleeps at the head and Benny rides at the foot by his little sister. So elegant—Solly!

LEZINSKY

I put my eyes out to earn the bread and this woman—she should buv a baby carriage. Oi! Oi!

MRS. LEZINSKY (*points to the carriage*)

Such a baby carriage what Mrs. Rooney has—it only happens to us once, Solly. Only five dollars—all fresh painted white—just like new—and such a cover to keep out the sun. She gets a little new go-cart for Eileen. Otherwise she don't give up such an elegant carriage what cost her more money than we could even see at one time except for rents and gas-bills. Five dollars is cheap for that carriage. Five dollars is nothing for that carriage, I tell you, Solly. Nothing at all. She sells it now before she moves to the Bronx this afternoon. Such a bargain we shouldn't lose, Solly—even if we don't pay all the money right away down. Yes, Solly? And Mrs. Rooney—she gives our David and Julius and Benny skates and a picture book—and their little sister this fine basket. (*She shows him the basket.*) Yes, Solly. Shouldn't we make sure to buy this baby carraige? Only five dollars, Solly, this baby carriage—

LEZINSKY

Baby carriage! Baby carriage! If I had so much money for baby carriages I hire me a cutter here. This way I go blind.

MRS. LEZINSKY

No, but by reading the Torah! And that way you lose good custom, too. (*Wheedling him again.*) Maybe you get good business and hire you a cutter when the little Eileen comes. Five dollars! Does that pay wages to a cutter? Yes, Solly? But it buys once a beautiful baby carriage, and David and Julius go wild to ride their little sister in it—and Benny at the foot.

LEZINSKY (*waving his arms*)

I should have a cutter not to lose my customers —and this woman—she would have a baby carriage. I lose my eyes, but she would have a baby carriage.

MRS. LEZINSKY

But it costs only five dollars. What costs a cutter?

LEZINSKY

At Union wages! I might as well ask for the moon, Goldie. *Oi! Oi!* Soon we all starve together.

MRS. LEZINSKY

You hire you a cheap hand here, Solly. He does pressing and all the dirty work. He works and you boss him around. That looks good to the customers. Yes, Solly? And I save up that five dollars soon and give it back to you. Yes, Solly? Business goes better now already when people come back from the country and everything picks up a little. I help now and we spare that five dollars. Mr. Rosenbloom brings us a little work. See? (*She points to the coat.*) You should make the sleeves shorter—

one inch. Mr. Rosenbloom gets thinner by his sickness. His clothes hang a little loose on him.

LEZINSKY (*looks at the trousers*)
And the pants?

MRS. LEZINSKY
Mr. Rosenbloom didn't lose his stomach by his his sickness. He only loses his face.

LEZINSKY
Such a *chutzpah!*

MRS. LEZINSKY
Yes, nothing makes Mr. Rosenbloom to lose his cheek, ain't it, Solly? And plenty roast goose has he to fill up his stomach. By us is no more roast goose nowadays.

LEZINSKY
We make up what we didn't get here maybe in the world to come, Goldie *leben.*

MRS. LEZINSKY
Roast goose in the world to come! Such a business! Angels shouldn't eat, Solly. I take my roast goose now—then I sure get it . . . How much you charge Mr. Rosenbloom for this, (*she points to the suit*) Solly?

LEZINSKY
One dollar and a half—maybe.

MRS. LEZINSKY
For such a job my cousin, Morris Schapiro, gets three dollars, and not too dear then. Everything goes 'way up and you stay 'way behind. You should raise your prices. No wonder we shall all starve together. It's not

baby carriages what ruin us. Did our David or Julius or Benny ever have such a baby carriage? No. But it is that you let the customers steal your work.

LEZINSKY

All right—I charge two dollars.

MRS. LEZINSKY

What good should half a dollar do? Three dollars, Solly.

LEZINSKY

Two dollars. Three dollars swindles him.

MRS. LEZINSKY

All right—then two dollars. Fifty cents is fifty cents, anyhow. (*She goes up to him and presses her face against his.*) Solly, *leben*, shouldn't our David and Julius and Benny have a baby carriage for their little sister?

LEZINSKY

Baby carriage—*Oi!* Peace, Goldie, my head aches.

MRS. LEZINSKY (*picking up the trousers*)

How much for these, Solly?

LEZINSKY

One dollar.

MRS. LEZINSKY (*derisively*)

One dollar you say! And for the lady's coat?

LEZINSKY

A couple of dollars, anyway.

MRS. LEZINSKY

A couple of dollars, anyway! And he thinks he does good business when he charges a couple of dollars anyway. And for that, my cousin,

Morris Schapiro, charges three dollars each. A couple of dollars! Your children will be left without bread. (*He mutters phrases from the Torah.*) You hear me, Solly? (*He goes on with his prayers.*) Prayers are what he answers me. Soon you pray in the streets.

LEZINSKY

Woe is me! Woe is me!

MRS. LEZINSKY

Could he even answer me? Yes, if it was roast goose I was asking for or black satin for a decent *Shabbos* dress. But no! (*Satirically*) Maybe you even get roast goose from your learning . . . Yes—on account of your praying we all have to go a-begging yet.

LEZINSKY

Tomorrow is *Rosch Hoschana*, Gietel.

MRS. LEZINSKY

Does *Rosch Hoschana* mean a roast goose by us? Does it even mean a baby carriage what costs five dollars?

LEZINSKY

Roast goose and baby carriage! You have no pious thoughts. Go away . . . My head swims.

MRS. LEZINSKY

That comes by fasting. Don't you fast enough every day?

LEZINSKY

She comes now to roast goose again.

MRS. LEZINSKY

What should I care for roast goose? *Rosch Hoschana* comes next year again. But the baby carriage—it never comes again.

LEZINSKY

Baby carriage! Baby carriage! When you should fast and pray . . .

MRS. LEZINSKY

What! Should I fast and give our David and Julius and Benny a shadow—maybe—for a little sister? But—yes—I fast, too . . . that even—for such a baby carriage. O, Solly—that much we all do—for our little Eileen.

LEZINSKY (*wearily, putting his hands to his eyes*)

All right. How much money have you got there—Gietel?

MRS. LEZINSKY (*sweetly*)

Now call me, Goldie, Solly, so I know you ain't mad.

LEZINSKY

Yes, yes.

MRS. LEZINSKY

Goldie—say it—Solly *leben.*

LEZINSKY

Go on—count it—Goldie.

(*She takes the money out and they count it together.*)

MR. AND MRS. LEZINSKY (*together*)

One . . . (*Counting out another bill.*) Two . . . (*Counting out a third dollar bill.*) Three . . . (*Counting out a two-dollar bill.*) Five dollars . . . (*Another two-dollar bill.*) Seven dollars . . . (*A ten-dollar bill.*) Seventeen . . . (*Another ten-dollar bill.*) Twenty-seven . . . (*The last ten-dollar bill.*) Thirty-seven.

LEZINSKY

Thirty-seven dollars in all—the rent and the gas!

MRS. LEZINSKY

And a little over, Solly, to pay on the baby carriage.

LEZINSKY

And tomorrow *Rosch Hoschana.* Shall we starve the children on *Rosch Hoschana?*

MRS. LEZINSKY

They could go a little hungry once for their little sister, Eileen.

LEZINSKY

Don't be too sure, Goldie, maybe another boy comes.

MRS. LEZINSKY

Well, even *if*—it needs the fresh air, too.

LEZINSKY (*firmly, after a moment's thought*)

No, Goldie, it couldn't be done. In the spring we buy a baby carriage.

MRS. LEZINSKY

You think she waits till spring to sell that baby carriage? She sells it now before she moves away—now, this afternoon, I tell you.

LEZINSKY

Well, we buy another carriage then.

MRS. LEZINSKY

You don't find such a bargain again anytime. She gives it away.

LEZINSKY

My eyes get much better soon—now—by the operation.

MRS. LEZINSKY

Operation! Operation! Always operation! And the baby comes. No carriage for our David and Julius to wheel her in—with our Benny at the foot—in the fresh air—and she dies on us in the heat next summer—maybe—and David and Julius and Benny—they lose their little sister.

LEZINSKY

Didn't David and Julius and Benny live without a baby carriage?

MRS. LEZINSKY

Yes, a mile to the park, maybe, and I carry them to the fresh air. And a baby carriage for her costs five dollars. What time shall I have for that with all the extra work and my back broken? In such a baby carriage the little sister sleeps from morning to night—on the sidewalk by the stoop; she gets fat and healthy from that baby carriage.

LEZINSKY

When I could pay for the operation, maybe—then—

MRS. LEZINSKY (*despairingly*)

Operations again—always operations!

LEZINSKY

Go away, Goldie, I must work.

MRS. LEZINSKY

I advise you not to have that operation now. He steals your money and don't help your eyes. Get another doctor. But baby carriages like this ain't so plenty.

LEZINSKY

God of Israel, shall I go blind because you would have a baby carriage for our unborn son?

MRS. LEZINSKY

No, but by reading the Torah—and that way you lose good customers, too—and she shall die in the heat because David and Julius cannot push her in that baby carriage.

LEZINSKY

Go away, Gietel, I have work to do. Maybe you could rip out the sleeves from Mr. Rosenbloom's coat?

MRS. LEZINSKY

I do anything—anything you like, Solly, for that baby carriage . . . Yes, I rip out the sleeves when I finish sewing on the buttons . . . I do anything—anything—so we get this baby carriage. We never get another such carriage.

LEZINSKY

God of Israel, will she never hear me when I say: *No!*

MRS. LEZINSKY

Then—Mrs. Cohen—she gets that baby carriage—and every day of my life I see it go past my window—and the little sister—she goes without. (*She picks up Mr. Rosenbloom's coat, looks it over and finds a small wallet in the breast-pocket. She tucks the wallet into her bosom. Fiercely, half-aloud but to herself.*) No! No! Mrs. Cohen shouldn't get that baby carriage . . . whatever happens—she shouldn't get it. (*She crosses to the mirror, pulls the wallet*

from her bosom, hurriedly counts the money in it, glances at her husband, then takes out a five-dollar bill. She hears a noise outside and makes a move as though to restore the money to the wallet, but, at the sound of steps on the stoop, she thrusts the loose five-dollar bill into her bosom. As Mr. Rosenbloom comes in, she has only time to stick the wallet back into the coat. She picks up the lady's coat and sews on buttons vigorously.)

MR. ROSENBLOOM

I left my wallet in that coat.

LEZINSKY (*with a motion of his hand toward the coat*)

Goldie.

MRS. LEZINSKY (*sewing the buttons on to the lady's coat*)

In which pocket, Mr. Rosenbloom?

MR. ROSENBLOOM (*crosses to the coat*)

You don't begin work on it yet?

MRS. LEZINSKY (*slowly puts her work aside*)

I rip the sleeves out so soon I sew these buttons on, Mr. Rosenbloom.

(*Mr. Rosenbloom looks in the breast-pocket and draws back in astonishment to find the wallet gone.*)

MRS. LEZINSKY

In which pocket, Mr. Rosenbloom?

MR. ROSENBLOOM

I keep it always in that breast-pocket

MRS. LEZINSKY (*taking the wallet from an outside pocket*)

Why—here it is, Mr. Rosenbloom.

MR. ROSENBLOOM (*suspiciously*)
From which pocket does it come?

MRS. LEZINSKY (*points*)
Right here, Mr. Rosenbloom.

MR. ROSENBLOOM (*shakes his head*)
I don't see how it got in that pocket.

MRS. LEZINSKY
We didn't touch that coat, Mr. Rosenbloom—except Solly looks when I told him what he should do to it—ain't it, Solly? Otherwise we didn't touch it.

MR. ROSENBLOOM (*opens the wallet*)
Funny! It couldn't walk out of one pocket into another all by itself.

MRS. LEZINSKY
We didn't touch it, Mr. Rosenbloom.

MR. ROSENBLOOM (*begins to count the bills*)
Maybe some customer—

MRS. LEZINSKY
That may be—all kinds of customers, Mr. Rosenbloom—

LEZINSKY (*as Mr. Rosenbloom goes over the money for the second time*)
But it hangs always in our sight. Who has been here, Goldie?

MR. ROSENBLOOM
There's a bill missing here.

MRS. LEZINSKY (*pretending great astonishment*)
Mr. Rosenbloom!

LEZINSKY (*with an accusing note in his tone, meant for his wife only*)
Gietel?

MRS. LEZINSKY
How should I know? (*To Mr. Rosenbloom*) Maybe you didn't count it right.

(*Rosenbloom counts it again.*)

MR. ROSENBLOOM
No—it's short—five dollars.

LEZINSKY (*under his breath, looking strangely at his wife*)
Mr. Rosenbloom, however that happens—I make up that five dollars. Such a thing shouldn't happen in my business. I make it up right away. Gietel!—Gietel—give me the money.

MRS. LEZINSKY (*in a trembling voice*)
I didn't—

LEZINSKY (*checks her*)
I pay you from my own money, Mr. Rosenbloom . . . Gietel! (*He puts out his hand for the money.*)

MRS. LEZINSKY
All right, Solly . . . (*She turns her back to Mr. Rosenbloom and pulls the roll of money from her bosom, thrusting the loose five-dollar bill back. Solomon, standing over her, sees this bill and puts out his hand for it.*)

LEZINSKY (*in a tense undertone*)
All—Gietel!—all!

(*Reluctantly she draws the five-dollar bill from her bosom and, seizing a moment when Mr. Rosenbloom is recounting his money, she thrusts it quickly into her husband's hand.*)

LEZINSKY (*crosses to Mr. Rosenbloom and counts out the five dollars from the bills in the roll*)
One dollar—two dollars—three dollars—and two is five dollars. (*He hands it to Mr. Rosenbloom.*)

MR. ROSENBLOOM (*hesitates*)
You shouldn't be out that five dollars, Mr. Lezinsky. Anyhow—pay me the difference when you charge for the suit.

MR. LEZINSKY
No, Mr. Rosenbloom—if you take the money now, please . . . I couldn't rest, otherwise. In all my life—this—never—happened—before.

MR. ROSENBLOOM (*takes the money*)
Well, if you want it that way, Mr. Lezinsky . . . You have the suit ready this evening, anyhow?

LEZINSKY
You get the suit this evening, Mr. Rosenbloom. I stop everything else . . . And I don't charge you anything for this work, Mr. Rosenbloom.

MR. ROSENBLOOM
Of course you charge. "Don't charge!" What kind of business is that?

LEZINSKY
I make you a present, Mr. Rosenbloom—for your trouble.

MR. ROSENBLOOM
I pay you for these alterations, all right. (*He goes out.*)

LEZINSKY (*searches his wife's face with ominous calm*)
Gietel! Gietel!

MRS. LEZINSKY

You make presents, eh, Solly? Are you a rabbi or a poor blind tailor—yes?

LEZINSKY (*bursts out*)

She makes a mock at me—this shameless one!

MRS. LEZINSKY

No, no, Solly—

LEZINSKY (*scathingly*)

Gietel! (*His eyes never leave her face.*)

MRS. LEZINSKY (*in a hushed voice*)

Why do you look at me like that, Solly?

LEZINSKY

Blind as I am, I see too much, Gietel.

MRS. LEZINSKY

Listen, Solly—I tell you now—

LEZINSKY (*silences her with a wave of his hand*)

What I get I give—(*He takes the five-dollar bill from his pocket, smooths it out and adds it to the roll.*) I give my money. I give my eyes . . . and this woman—she sells me for a baby carriage.

MRS. LEZINSKY

No, no, Solly, you shouldn't say such things before you know—

LEZINSKY

Silence, woman! How should I *not* know? It is here in my hand— the five-dollar bill—here in my hand. I have counted the money. Thirty-seven dollars we had. I have given him back his five dollars, and thirty-seven dollars remain. How is that, Gietel? What is the answer to that? She cheats the customer and she

cheats me . . . Rather should I take my children by the hand and beg from door to door.

MRS. LEZINSKY

Solly—Solly—I tell you—the baby carriage—

LEZINSKY

Out of my sight, woman; I forbid you to come into this shop again.

MRS. LEZINSKY

O, Solly *leben*, that couldn't be—

LEZINSKY

The mother of my children—she sins—for a baby carriage.

MRS. LEZINSKY

Listen, Solly—I didn't mean to keep that money. As there's a God of Israel I didn't mean to keep it. I should use it—just this afternoon to buy the baby carriage—and when the customers pay us—put the money back before he misses it.

LEZINSKY

Meshugge! So much money isn't coming to us. And why should you use Mr. Rosenbloom's money? Why shouldn't you take it from the money you had?

MRS. LEZINSKY

How could I use that money? Don't you pay the rent this afternoon to the agent? And they shut off the gas when we don't settle: by five o'clock they shut it off. And Mrs Rooney moves away—(*she breaks into sobbing*) and so—I thought I lose the baby carriage.

LEZINSKY

Gietel—Gietel—you are a—I can't speak the word, Gietel—It sticks in my throat.

MRS. LEZINSKY

No, no, Solly, you shouldn't speak that word. If I took it to keep it, maybe. But—no. I couldn't do such a thing. Not for a million baby carriages could I do such a thing. Not for anything could I keep what is not my own —I tell you, Solly . . . (*Pleadingly*) But just to keep it for a few hours, maybe? Why should a man with so much money miss a little for a few hours? Then Mr. Rosenbloom—he comes back in. I change my mind, but the door opens and it is too late already. Solly *leben*, did I keep it back—the five dollars? I ask you, Solly? Didn't I give it all into your hand? I ask you that, Solly.

LEZINSKY

Woe is me!—The mother of my children—and she takes what is not her own!

MRS. LEZINSKY

So much money, and not one dollar to pay Mrs. Rooney for the baby carriage! You see, Solly—always fine-dressed people around—the mamas and the little children all dressed fine—with white socks and white shoes And our David—and our Julius—and our Benny, even—what must they wear? Old clothes! Yes. And to save the money they should wear black stockings—and old shoes. Never no pretty things. And it's all the time work—work—work, and we never have nothing—no new

clothes—no pretty things—(*She breaks down completely.*)

LEZINSKY

So our children grow up with the fear of God in their hearts—

MRS. LEZINSKY

What should little children know of all this pious business, when they must play alone on the stoop with Izzy Klein together. For why? The Cohen children shouldn't play with our David and Julius and Benny. They make a snout at them. The Cohens dress them up stylish and they should play with Gentile children. They push my Benny in the stomach when he eats an ice-cream cone, and they say—regular—to my David and Julius: "Sheeny"—the same as if they wasn't Jewish, too. . . . Just for once I wanted something lovely and stylish—like other people have. . . . Then Mrs. Rooney she asks—only five dollars for the baby carriage—and (*choking back a sob*) Mrs. Cohen—now, Mrs. Cohen—*she* gets it. She gets it, and I must want—and want. First David—then Julius—then comes Benny—and now the little sister—and never once a baby carriage! (*She sobs.*)

LEZINSKY

We should raise our children to be pious.

(*There is a sound of trundling wheels. Mrs. Lezinsky looks out. The carriage is gone from the window.*)

MRS. LEZINSKY (*as the door opens and Mrs. Rooney appears, wheeling the carriage in, low voiced*) Mrs. Rooney, Solly; she comes now to say goodbye. (*She mops her eyes, tries to put on a casual look.*)

MRS. ROONEY

Now there you are, Mrs. Lezinsky, blanket and all.

(*Lezinsky works feverishly without lifting his eyes.*)

MRS. LEZINSKY (*in a low, appealing voice*) You should look at it once, Solly. (*Lezinsky stops for a moment and lets his eyes rest on the baby carriage.*) Ain't it a beautiful, stylish baby carriage, Solly?

MRS. ROONEY

There it is now, and I'll be running on, for Mrs. Klein's Anna's keeping Eileen and I have her to dress before her pa comes home. He's getting off earlier for the moving.

MRS. LEZINSKY

The little Eileen! Why didn't you bring her along with you, Mrs. Rooney?

MRS. ROONEY

She went to sleep on me or I would that.

MRS. LEZINSKY (*her eyes on her husband's face in mute appeal*) O, Mrs. Rooney—so little business and so much expense—and my Solly has an operation for his sick eyes soon—it breaks my heart—but—Mrs. Cohen . . . (*In a shaking voice*) *She* gets this lovely baby carriage.

MRS. ROONEY (*taking in the situation*)

Mrs. Cohen—*she* gets it! Does she now? Not if my name's Rooney does Mrs. Cohen get it, and she only after offering to raise me a dollar to make sure of the baby carriage, knowing your sore need of the same. Am I a lady or not, Mrs. Lezinsky? 'Tis that I want to know. "I'll give you six dollars for it", says she to me. Says I to her: "Mrs. Cohen—when I spoke to you of that baby carriage," says I, "it clean slipped my mind that I promised the same to Mrs. Lezinsky long ago," says I—and so I did, though I forgot to make mention of it to you at the time, Mrs. Lezinsky. So here it is, and here it stays or my name's not Rooney.

MRS. LEZINSKY

But so much money we haven't got now—not even for the operation, Mrs. Rooney . . . (*In a soft, pleading undertone to her husband.*) Only five dollars, Solly! (*Sinking her voice still lower.*) Anyhow—I don't deserve no baby carriage—maybe—

(*Lezinsky makes no sign.*)

MRS. LEZINSKY

If we could possibly pay for that baby carriage we keep it, Mrs. Rooney— (*She turns back to her husband, her voice shakes.*) For our Benny and the little sister—yes, Solly? (*She waits and watches him with mute appeal, then, forcing herself to speak casually.*) But it couldn't be

done, Mrs. Rooney— (*Bravely*) Solly should have every dollar for that operation.

MRS. ROONEY

There now—no more about it! 'Tis your own from this day out . . . You can take your own time to be paying for it . . . I'll be wanting some work done anyhow—when the cold weather sets in.

MRS. LEZINSKY (*between tears and laughter*)

Solly! . . . Ain't it wonderful? Mrs. Rooney —she trusts us—for this beautiful baby carriage! . . . O, Mrs. Rooney!

MRS. ROONEY

'Tis little enough to be doing for my godchild that could be was she born a Catholic now.

MRS. LEZINSKY

O, Mrs. Rooney, dear Mrs. Rooney! Solly, Solly, we should have a baby carriage at last! At last we should have a baby carriage! O Solly, Solly, what a *mitzvah*! Yes, Solly? (*As Mrs. Rooney starts to leave.*) But your blanket, Mrs. Rooney—

MRS. ROONEY

I'll be throwing that in—for good luck.

MRS. LEZINSKY

It breaks my heart you move away, Mrs. Rooney.

MRS. ROONEY

See you soon. (*She opens the door; looks up the street as she stands in the doorway.*) Here's the kids coming.

MRS. LEZINSKY

My David and Julius and Benny, they could die for joy to wheel their little sister in this baby carriage.

MRS. ROONEY

Well, good luck—the both of you—and goodbye! (*With a sense of pride in the greater prosperity which the new address means to her.*) Three thousand and thirty-seven Jerome Avenue—don't forget!

MRS. LEZINSKY (*bending over the baby carriage*)

Goodbye, Mrs. Rooney—next time you come maybe you see her in the baby carriage. (*Smoothing the blanket.*)—The little Eileen! (*She turns to her husband as the door closes.*) Yes, Solly?

(*They look at each other in silence for a moment. She puts out her hands imploringly. His face softens; he lays his hand on her shoulder as the three little boys, David, Julius and Benny pass by the window. As the shop door opens, the Curtain falls.*)

THE DOG

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

In the order of their appearance

THE CLERK of the Magistrate's Court

THE JUDGE of the Magistrate's Court

SELMA ENGSTROM, dressmaker, defendant

DR. MAYBANK, hospital interne and ambulance surgeon

MRS. WILLIAMS, a neighbour, customer of the defendant

MR. HANSTEIN, landlord of the defendant

PLACE: The Magistrate's Court Room. All the persons of the play are within the railing that divides the Court proper from the spectators.

TIME: The present day.

THE DOG

SCENE

A Magistrate's Court. Only the space reserved for the Court, clerk, witnesses and prisoners appears. The Judge is presiding. Selma Engstrom is in the witness chair. She is a slender, blonde woman with mild blue eyes. Her face is pale and tear-stained.

CLERK (*rapidly and running his words together, without looking at the prisoner, Selma Engstrom*)
Hold up your right hand and be sworn.

(*The prisoner confused, fails to understand and looks about helplessly.*)

JUDGE (*in a tired but not unkind voice*)
Hold up your right hand and be sworn.

(*The prisoner raises her right hand, then drops it immediately.*)

CLERK (*sweeping his words along*)
D'u solemnly swear that what you say here shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth s'elp you God?

JUDGE (*with a faint touch of irritability*)
Hold up your right hand.

(*The prisoner raises her right hand again.*)

CLERK
Say: I do.

SELMA ENGSTROM
I do.

JUDGE
Your name is Engstrom?

SELMA ENGSTROM (*in a faint voice, keeping her eyes fixed on the clerk, impressed by his self-importance*)
Yes, sir, Selma Engstrom.

CLERK (*with tremendous dignity*)
Address the Court.

SELMA ENGSTROM (*confused*)
Yes, sir.

CLERK (*patronisingly*)
Say: Your Honour.

SELMA ENGSTROM
Yes, your Honour.

(*The clerk directs her attention to the Judge with a nod of his head.*)

JUDGE
Married or single?

SELMA ENGSTROM
Married.

CLERK (*prompting*)
Your Honour.

SELMA ENGSTROM (*repeating the words almost inaudibly*)
Married, your Honour.

JUDGE
Can't you manage to speak a little louder?

SELMA ENGSTROM (*bracing herself for the effort*)
Married, your Honour.

JUDGE
You are accused of an attempt to take your own life—Why did you do this thing?

SELMA ENGSTROM
It just happened, sir—your Honour.

JUDGE
What do you mean by "It just happened"?

SELMA ENGSTROM
Emil had brought the chloroform home for Hector—

JUDGE
Hector?

SELMA ENGSTROM
That's our dog.

JUDGE (*in a colourless tone, helping her on*)
And you were going to chloroform your dog?

SELMA ENGSTROM
We didn't want to—but—we made up our minds we'd have to.

JUDGE
What's the matter with the dog?

SELMA ENGSTROM
Nothing's the matter with him—only— Well—your Honour—the dog—has to eat—

JUDGE
You mean you can't afford to keep him?

SELMA ENGSTROM
Not now. So Emil brought home the chloroform—

JUDGE
Emil's your husband?

SELMA ENGSTROM
Yes, your Honour—and we made up our minds —to kill—Hector—

JUDGE
The dog?

SELMA ENGSTROM
Yes, your Honour . . . I was afraid to let Emil do it. I didn't know what—might—happen—he's so blue.

JUDGE
You say your husband is very much depressed?

SELMA ENGSTROM
Oh, yes, your Honour—all the time—now . . . He said we might just as well all die together—with those few cents.

JUDGE
Why didn't you telephone for the ambulance and have the dog cared for?

SELMA ENGSTROM
We haven't any telephone.

JUDGE
There must be one in the neighbourhood.

SELMA ENGSTROM
We used to use the grocer's at the corner —but—now—

JUDGE
You owe him a bill, I suppose.

SELMA ENGSTROM
Y-e-s. So now we have to go to Broadway and pay a nickel.—If you haven't got the nickel—

JUDGE
Who sold your husband the chloroform?

SELMA ENGSTROM
The druggist he was working for gave it to him.

JUDGE
If your husband's working, why are you in such a condition?

SELMA ENGSTROM
But he's not working now, your Honour, he's lost that place.

JUDGE
Discharged?

SELMA ENGSTROM
Yes, your Honour.

JUDGE
What was he discharged for?

SELMA ENGSTROM
The druggist was afraid to keep him; his memory's weak. He's lost all his places that way—after two or three weeks.

JUDGE
Has this always been so?

SELMA ENGSTROM
No, indeed. Emil used to be a fine prescription clerk. But one night when he was working 'way down on Grove Street, coming home late, he got hit on the head and ever since he can't remember well.

JUDGE
Had he been drinking?

SELMA ENGSTROM
A little—only a little.

JUDGE
Is he a drinking man?

SELMA ENGSTROM
No, sir, he just used to take a glass of beer once in a long while.

JUDGE
So the chloroform was given to your husband?

SELMA ENGSTROM
Yes, your Honour.

JUDGE
What is the name of the druggist who gave your husband the chloroform?

SELMA ENGSTROM
I can't just remember it this minute.

JUDGE
Something wrong with *your* memory, too?

SELMA ENGSTROM
O no, sir, your Honour. But—I'm—kind—of—upset. Emil can remember some things. He can remember that.

JUDGE
Has your husband tried to get work of any kind since he lost his last position?

SELMA ENGSTROM
Emil doesn't seem to have any luck getting work. He doesn't seem to know how to ask for it, somehow.

JUDGE
What do you mean by that?

SELMA ENGSTROM

I only meant—he's timid-like, kind of—oh,—afraid—somehow.

JUDGE

Has he always been this way—so helpless?

SELMA ENGSTROM

Oh, no, not till after he was hurt.

JUDGE

How long ago was that?

SELMA ENGSTROM

Three years ago, your Honour. (*The last two words under the hypnotic eye of the clerk.*)

JUDGE

How have you managed to live since?

SELMA ENGSTROM

I was always able to earn something till lately —your Honour.

JUDGE

What did you do?

SELMA ENGSTROM

I worked in dressmaking establishments—high class ones—(*With a touch of pride*) I helped with the designing.

JUDGE

Did it pay well?

SELMA ENGSTROM

In the season, sometimes thirty-five dollars a week; sometimes much more.

JUDGE

Well, then—?

SELMA ENGSTROM

Yes, your Honour, if it lasted the year 'round.

But it don't—only a few weeks at a time—during the great rush—just for the season.

JUDGE

Then what did you do?

SELMA ENGSTROM

I had a few customers who brought me dresses to make now and then and—(*modestly, with down-cast eyes*) I—painted a little.

JUDGE (*not hearing her distinctly*)

You what?

SELMA ENGSTROM (*flushing painfully*)

I painted a little.

JUDGE

Painted? What do you paint?

SELMA ENGSTROM

Cards and sofa-cushions—and—sometimes—pictures.

JUDGE

And you couldn't get along—even then?

SELMA ENGSTROM

Oh, yes, we managed, but it wasn't easy. I always wanted to live in a nice neighborhood.

JUDGE

Isn't your husband in good health?

SELMA ENGSTROM

Oh, yes, sir.

JUDGE

And he makes no effort to get work?

SELMA ENGSTROM

He does an odd job now and then, whenever he can get it to do. It's not so easy. No one

wants to give steady work to a man who can't remember.

JUDGE

Can't he remember anything? You said—

SELMA ENGSTROM (*breaking in*)

I didn't mean that—only, he can't depend on his memory.

JUDGE

But couldn't he get some steady light work to do?

SELMA ENGSTROM

He's done his best. I wouldn't mind, if I could sew the same as I used to.

JUDGE

You mean you can't get any more sewing to do?

SELMA ENGSTROM

Oh, I could get work.

JUDGE

Then why don't you?

SELMA ENGSTROM

I'm not able to do the work any longer; Emil's had to run the sewing machine for me the last two months.

JUDGE

What's the matter with you?

SELMA ENGSTROM

I have a pain here all the time. (*She puts her hand to her side.*) And I have faint spells.

JUDGE

Have you done anything about it?

SELMA ENGSTROM

The doctor says I can't expect to get strong yet; and I don't seem to improve; that makes things worse; it worries Emil.

JUDGE

Haven't you any relatives who could help you?

SELMA ENGSTROM

All our people are in Sweden; besides they haven't got any more than they need for themselves.

JUDGE

How long have you been living in this country?

SELMA ENGSTROM

Fifteen years; we were married in this country.

JUDGE

Had you been on good terms with your husband before this incident with the chloroform?

SELMA ENGSTROM

Well—Emil and I—we had—quarreled—a little.

JUDGE

What about?

SELMA ENGSTROM (*embarrassed*)

Emil wanted to borrow some money—(*She stops.*)

JUDGE

Go on.

SELMA ENGSTROM

From Mrs. Williams . . . (*The name seems to have escaped from her quite involuntarily. She stops short.*)

JUDGE

Yes, go on.

SELMA ENGSTROM

An old customer of mine . . . Well . . . I didn't want to ask her for money. There's no way to pay her back, now that I can't sew for her.

JUDGE

Was this just before the chloroforming?

SELMA ENGSTROM

Yes, your Honour.

JUDGE

You say your husband wanted you to borrow money?

SELMA ENGSTROM

Yes, your Honour.

JUDGE

What did he want you to borrow money for?

SELMA ENGSTROM

To buy something that I could eat; I can't eat everything.

JUDGE

Is that all you had quarreled about?

SELMA ENGSTROM

No, your Honour, we'd quarreled about the dog, too.

JUDGE

About the dog?

SELMA ENGSTROM

Yes . . . Emil said I liked the dog better than him.

JUDGE

What reason had he to say that?

SELMA ENGSTROM

He was mad because I gave my dinner to Hector.

JUDGE

The dog?

SELMA ENGSTROM

Yes, sir, the dog . . . We had—sausage—for dinner . . . I couldn't eat it . . . My husband didn't believe me . . . (*She lowers her voice.*) He said it was just an excuse to give it to the dog.

JUDGE (*a little impatiently*)

Why don't you give that dog away to somebody?

SELMA ENGSTROM

We couldn't do that; we couldn't be sure he'd be well treated. (*Excitedly*) No, then I rather have him dead first.

JUDGE

So you had a scene about the dog, and then your husband left the house and you put yourself to sleep with the chloroform?

SELMA ENGSTROM

No, your Honour, it was like this: when I saw how bad Emil felt not to have enough for the dog to eat—I said to myself: I'll kill Hector, myself—for Emil's sake. Then he won't have to be ashamed that we haven't enough to feed the dog. You see he thinks it's all his fault, your Honour; and so I got the bottle of chloroform and called Hector. And then he comes to me so happy, thinking I had something nice to give him, your Honour—

and licked my hands . . . I couldn't do it . . . I couldn't . . . I thought to myself: We might just as well all starve together . . . And the cork was out of the bottle in my hands—and I heard a funny roaring in my ears . . . I tried to put the cork in the bottle . . . But I couldn't move my hands . . . And then I remember Hector was licking my face . . . And next I didn't know anything more.

JUDGE

If I let you off, how do I know that you won't go straight home and do the same thing over again?

SELMA ENGSTROM

There's no danger of that, your Honour. Emil couldn't live through that again. He didn't seem right in his head when he came to see me yesterday. He's the one that ought to die, not me, he said . . . He kept saying that . . . This happening on top of everything else!

JUDGE

Something else wrong?

SELMA ENGSTROM

Oh, everything's wrong, your Honour.

JUDGE

Everything—what do you mean?

SELMA ENGSTROM

We'll have to move if we can't raise the rent.

JUDGE

Have you been served with a notice?

SELMA ENGSTROM

Oh, no, Mr. Hanstein, the landlord, himself

rents the flat; he's trusted us a long time· we won't ever be able to pay him.

JUDGE
How much rent do you pay?

SELMA ENGSTROM
Thirty dollars a month.

JUDGE
Whereabouts do you live?

SELMA ENGSTROM
On Sherman Avenue.

JUDGE
Where's that?

SELMA ENGSTROM
Not far from the Kingsbridge subway station, your Honour, North, near Dyckman Street.

JUDGE
I think you ought to get cheaper quarters. How many rooms have you?

SELMA ENGSTROM
Three rooms and bath.

JUDGE
You could manage with less.

SELMA ENGSTROM
It's hard to get a smaller flat than that or a cheaper one, your Honour. I've always tried to live in a nice neighbourhood.

JUDGE
Yes, yes, I know.

SELMA ENGSTROM
And the landlord's trusted us so long—if we got any money we ought to give it to him.

JUDGE
How much rent do you owe?

SELMA ENGSTROM
Four month's rent on the fifteenth of this month, your Honour.

JUDGE (*surprised*)
Your landlord lets the rent mount up like that?

SELMA ENGSTROM
Mr. Hanstein's always easy with his tenants.

JUDGE
When did you get too ill to work?

SELMA ENGSTROM
About a month ago.

JUDGE
And how have you managed since?

SELMA ENGSTROM
We got a little money from the church I've been going to this winter. But I don't belong, and the church is poor, and they have so many to help, always.

JUDGE
Yes, I know.

SELMA ENGSTROM
Emil went to the Salvation Army. They promised to find some work for him later on. (*Shamefacedly*) . . . And the Volunteers . . . *they* gave us a little money.

JUDGE
If your husband is an able-bodied man you ought never to have fallen into this condition. He must be afraid of hard work.

SELMA ENGSTROM
Oh, no, your Honour, he's willing enough, but he isn't strong; he doesn't eat enough to keep up his strength.

JUDGE
Has he any bad habits?

SELMA ENGSTROM
Not a one.

JUDGE (*aloud but to himself*)
This is a difficult case. (*To the prisoner*) Before I pass on this case, I should like to examine your husband.

SELMA ENGSTROM
Yes, your Honour.

JUDGE
Why isn't he here? Doesn't he know that it's contempt of court to stay away? Doesn't he know that he's wanted as a witness?

SELMA ENGSTROM
He was coming, your Honour, he was going to be here early.

JUDGE (*grimly*)
You don't think he's forgotten?

SELMA ENGSTROM (*anxiously looking in the direction of the court-room door. She grows more and more excited*)
He'd never forget this—not as long as he lives; he said to me yesterday—over and over again—if one of us has to die—it ought to be him. He thinks he's a hindrance to me.

JUDGE
You're very unfortunate.

SELMA ENGSTROM

If I can get better, I don't mind anything, so long as we're together.

JUDGE

He must get something to do. He'll have to do something. There are plenty of things a man can turn his hand to, if he has the will.

SELMA ENGSTROM

Emil's not lazy. It's only that he was trained to do the one thing and he's afraid to trust himself at anything else.

JUDGE

Well, he'll have to get over being afraid, if he doesn't want his wife to starve.

SELMA ENGSTROM

Emil's good, your Honor . . . He's gone without food to give it to me when he thought I didn't know it. (*She grows very pale and leans back in the chair.*)

JUDGE

Aren't you feeling well?

SELMA ENGSTROM

No, your Honour,—a—little—faint.

JUDGE (*to the clerk*)

Some water.

(*The Judge watches the prisoner with humane curiosity. The Clerk directs an officer to fetch water. Selma drinks it eagerly.*)

JUDGE

Better now?

SELMA ENGSTROM (*with an effort*)
Yes,—I—think so.

JUDGE
I've kept you a long time; now you may take a rest.

(*She attempts to rise and falls back. An officer assists her from the chair.*)

JUDGE (*to the Clerk*)
Call the witness in this case.

CLERK
Witnesses in the case of State of New York against Selma Engstrom. (*A thoughtful-looking young man with a resolute mouth comes forward and takes the witness stand as the Clerk says:*) Take the chair and be sworn. (*The witness raises his right hand.*) D'u solemnly–swear–that–what–you–are–to–tell–shall–be–the–truth, the–whole–truth–and–nothing–but–the–truth–se'elp–you–God.

DR. MAYBANK
I do.

JUDGE
What is your name?

DR. MAYBANK
I am Dr. Charles Maybank, interne at the Washington Site Hospital.

JUDGE
What do you know about this case?

DR. MAYBANK
I am the ambulance surgeon who took charge of the patient.

JUDGE
Who was with her when you were called to her?

DR. MAYBANK
Her husband and some neighbours.

JUDGE
What was her condition?

DR. MAYBANK
Unconscious, but in no immediate danger.

JUDGE
You mean that she would have recovered consciousness without you?

DR. MAYBANK
I think so. However, I can't be certain of it, in view of her general condition.

JUDGE
What was her general condition?

DR. MAYBANK
Anæmic—from insufficient nourishment—to the point of exhaustion. Moreover—the patient expects to become a mother.

JUDGE (*sitting very erect*)
Indeed!

DR. MAYBANK
She does not wish to have the child, and has been taking all kinds of nostrums with the hope of preventing its birth.

JUDGE
How did you you discover this?

DR. MAYBANK
The patient herself told me.

JUDGE
She told you that voluntarily?

DR. MAYBANK
In answer to my questions at the hospital.

JUDGE
But that is a criminal action.

DR. MAYBANK
The patient does not seem to realize it in the least.

JUDGE
What is her present condition?

DR. MAYBANK
She is now in danger from these attempts and will continue to be in danger until she has grown decidedly stronger. She ought to have good nourishment and complete rest—no worry.

JUDGE
She is unable, then, in your opinion, to do any work?

DR. MAYBANK
At present and for some time, yes.

JUDGE
Will you give your opinion as to whether the chloroforming was accidental or intentional?

DR. MAYBANK (*after a moment's thought*)
I can't judge. I wouldn't want to take the responsibility.

JUDGE (*draws a long breath and leans back in his chair*)
I *see.*

(*There is a pause.*)

JUDGE
You have seen the husband?

DR. MAYBANK

Yes, your Honour, he was the first one to discover his wife; it was he who sent in the call.

JUDGE

From all that I can gather from the wife, he seems a thorough incompetent. What was your impression of him?

DR. MAYBANK

I paid very little attention to him; he acted like a man who had been dazed by shock.

JUDGE

Any man might be affected in the same way?

DR. MAYBANK

Well . . . perhaps not to the same extent.

JUDGE

Was there anything about the man that might lead you to believe him mentally defective?

DR. MAYBANK

Oh, no, your Honour.

JUDGE

This is a very difficult case and one not to be quickly passed upon. There is always the temptation to dismiss the prisoner, but (*suddenly irritated*) why isn't the husband here?

DR. MAYBANK

I think the man's spending his time trying to get a little money together.

JUDGE

Yes, yes, but—

DR. MAYBANK (*with a sympathetic glance toward the prisoner*)

Personally, I don't believe that the pris—patient's act was premeditated.

JUDGE

Perhaps not. Perhaps not. There seems to be a distinct doubt. (*He muses aloud*) But still—I might let her go home—and with the conditions existing there, she might make another attempt to take her life before night . . . The Court must not abuse the power of clemency . . .

DR. MAYBANK

Want seems to have produced in both man and woman a marked tendency to melancholia. The man said to me at the hospital: "I'm the one that ought to go. I'm no good."

JUDGE

Do you consider her a hospital case?

DR. MAYBANK

No, your Honour, she has been discharged as convalescent.

JUDGE

If it were not for the husband, something might be done for her. The fact that she has a husband, who is able-bodied and not mentally defective, stands in the way of every provision which might meet the case. But she must be made to understand the gravity of her attempt against the life of the child she is to bear.

DR. MAYBANK

I have talked with her. She sees no way out.

JUDGE (*to Dr. Maybank*)

I have no more questions; you may step down. (*To the Clerk*) Recall the defendant. (*To Selma*) Take the stand.

(*An officer assists Selma back to the witness stand.*)

JUDGE (*with reluctant austerity*)
I understand that you are to become a mother?

SELMA ENGSTROM
I'm afraid so, your Honour.

JUDGE
Doesn't that fact rouse your husband to a sense of the situation?

SELMA ENGSTROM
That's what's the matter; that's what's worrying him. He thinks he's nothing but a burden to me.

JUDGES
Did your dread of bearing this child have anything to do with the chloroforming?

SELMA ENGSTROM (*weakly*)
I don't think so, your Honour.

JUDGE
You are not sure? Remember—you are under oath to tell the truth.

SELMA ENGSTROM
I can't be sure, you Honour. (*With a flood of tears*) If I have to have the child, then we might as well die first as last.

JUDGE
I must warn you against any statement which might be construed as a veiled threat against your own life.

SELMA ENGSTROM
Yes, your Honour.

JUDGE

Some work can be found for your husband. He can take a place as janitor somewhere—

SELMA ENGSTROM

There's no living in that. Emil tried it once. He nearly went out of his mind with the worry.

JUDGE

You understand now that any attempt against your own life—or the life of the unborn child —constitutes a criminal offense?

SELMA ENGSTROM

What's to become of us if I have to have it?

JUDGE

That is not the point at law; the statute remains.

SELMA ENGSTROM

Then there's no way.

JUDGE

The one way is for you to avoid committing a criminal act. You must understand that.

SELMA ENGSTROM (*sullenly, yet plaintively*)

Everyone does it.

JUDGE (*shocked*)

What is that you say?

SELMA ENGSTROM

Women I know, customers—even—who don't have to earn their own living.

JUDGE

This is shocking.

SELMA ENGSTROM

It's true, your Honour; you must know that. . . . Without the baby I can support myself

and Emil. But what can I do with a baby? Just starve—all of us.

JUDGE (*with a touch of asperity*)
Perhaps you prefer dogs to children.

SELMA ENGSTROM
O your Honour, I used to think it was the one thing in the world I wanted—a little child . . . But the dog came to us when he was only a little puppy . . . We've raised him . . . He's the only thing that cheers us up a little. That's the reason I can't part with him, your Honour. . . . Not that I wouldn't like a child—if things were different . . .

JUDGE
The law of the State of New York holds any attempt against the life of an unborn infant a criminal offense. You understand?

SELMA ENGSTROM
Yes, your Honour.

JUDGE
Whereas you are now before me charged with an attempt against your own life.

SELMA ENGSTROM (*desperately as though to herself*)
Why didn't I die? It'd been the easiest way.

JUDGE (*assumes the attitude of decision. There is a dead stillness in the court-room*)
One of two courses is open to this Court: to bind the defendant over for hearing before the grand jury—or—to dismiss her. In view of the extenuating circumstances alleged, I dismiss the defendant.

SELMA ENGSTROM (*who has been leaning forward*

listening with half-closed eyes, deeply moved)
Thank you, your Honour.

(*A man and a woman are admitted to the enclosure. At the sound of their voices Selma turns her head. They nod to her.*)

CLERK (*bringing down his gavel*)
This court now stands adjourned.

SELMA ENGSTROM (*in a shaking voice*)
Something—has happened—to Emil, something—has happened—to him. (*She sways forward, the clerk catches her in his arms.*)

MRS. WILLIAMS (*rushes up to her*)
She's fainted.

JUDGE
Do you know this woman?

MRS. WILLIAMS
Yes, your Honour, it's about her husband, we've come. We thought he was here—till Mr. Hanstein came.

MR. HANSTEIN
I'm their landlord; I heard about the trouble and went around—

MRS. WILLIAMS (*excitedly*)
And he smelt gas—

MR. HANSTEIN
The gas was so strong I wonder some of the tenants hadn't noticed it. They told me the man was at court. The janitor opened the door. It wasn't so bad in the kitchen where the dog was. But in the bedroom! The door was locked. We forced it open—

MRS. WILLIAMS (*breaks in*)
There was Mr. Engstrom—just as he came in from the street, overcoat and all—dead.

MR. HANSTEIN
He's been dead for hours, the doctor said.

MRS. WILLIAMS
The gas turned on full—the poor dog whining for him . . . Poor Mrs. Engstrom! What will she do now. Only sixty cents in his pocket and some pawntickets! And all this on account of the dog.

JUDGE
The dog's still alive you say?

MR. HANSTEIN (*compassionately, moving to the side of the defendant*)
She's coming to.

MRS. WILLIAMS (*as Selma opens her eyes*)
O yes, your Honour, Hector's all right; he's a fine dog.

CURTAIN

THE FIRST TIME

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

In the order of their appearance

MRS. WEST

OFFICER BRADY

OFFICER HIGGINS

MARY KENNEDY

NORA PRINDELL

PLACE: The matron's room in the police-station.

TIME: The present day.

THE FIRST TIME

SCENE

The Matron's room in a police-station. Cement floor. Wooden table. Small tarnished looking-glass. Chairs. Other appropriate furnishings.

MRS. WEST (*to Officer Brady*)

What's the charge against Mary Kennedy?

BRADY

'Twas Higgins run her in. (*He calls*) Higgins! Higgins! (*Higgins comes in.*) Mrs. West here's asking after your prisoner.

MRS. WEST

I'm asking after a girl—Mary Kennedy by name.

HIGGINS

The same.

MRS. WEST

Why did you run her in?

HIGGINS

Drunk and disorderly.

MRS. WEST

Drinking she had been, but—drunk and disorderly! I don't believe it.

HIGGINS

O Mrs. West, don't be wasting your sympathies on a little daughter of joy, when it's myself's been making a bid for it these twelve months.

MRS. WEST

Daughter of joy, is it? That's a fine new name you've picked up from your betters. Daughters of sorrow is more like.

HIGGINS

Daughters of joy is the genteel, high-toned name for the article, Mrs. West. (*Higgins winks at Officer Brady.*)

MRS. WEST

I'd as soon think of calling her by that name as of calling yourself a gentleman, Michael Higgins.

HIGGINS

Don't be taking liberties with my character, Mrs. West; 'tis not the occupation makes the gentleman.

MRS. WEST

Character you call it? There's not a janitor on your beat doesn't rush the can for you. This girl! . . . Hadn't she any money to give you? Or how much did the man she's keeping pay you to run her in?

HIGGINS

Don't be taking stock in what these daughters of joy are after telling you. The word of such is not even accepted in court.

MRS. WEST

Daughters of joy!—You're fond of saying it.

HIGGINS

Sure 'tis themselves are the grand sports. Champagne and cigarettes and silk stockings with wads of money on the inside of them.

BRADY (*expostulates with Higgins as Mrs. West disappears through the back door*)
Higgins! Higgins!

HIGGINS
'Tis a rare treat to see the matron riled.

(*Mrs. West comes back into the room.*)

MRS. WEST
She's shaking all over with the nervousness—since the time she fainted.

BRADY
Sure there's not many of them faints on you.

HIGGINS
True for you.

MRS. WEST
Well—all of a sudden—over she goes—in a heap—on the floor . . .

HIGGINS
'Tis the suspense doing it.

BRADY
She'll get used to that in good time.

MRS. WEST (*to Higgins*)
Couldn't you speak to the clerk and have her up first?

HIGGINS
I can't promise you, Mrs. West, but I'll do my best. The ladies are all alike. 'Tis even yourself has to fall back for assistance (*winking at Brady*) on a lord of creation. And 'tis the same way with a daughter of joy.

MRS. WEST
Yes, they have hearts in them and have to

care for something, even if it's only a dirty cur that has but the shape of a man.

HIGGINS

'Tis a pity, now, Mrs. West, that you didn't qualify for the law. Not a man in the court could beat you when you set your tongue a wagging.

MRS. WEST

Well, it wouldn't be you, Michael Higgins. (*As Higgins goes out.*) Drunk and disorderly! She's the timidest creature. Not a blessed word out of her mouth this night long—just sobbing fit to break her heart.

BRADY (*stolidly*)

'Tis the jag wearing off.

MRS. WEST

She's that weak she can hardly stand. I'm giving her a cup of tea.

BRADY

You're too tender-hearted altogether, Mrs. West. When you've been here a while longer you'll be saving your tea. 'Tis a brandy-and-soda she's needing.

MRS. WEST

It passes me how you can be so hard.

BRADY

'Tisn't in human nature not to get used to it.

MRS. WEST

And this her first time!

BRADY

That it may be her last, then!

MRS. WEST

God knows . . . That depends—entirely.

HIGGINS (*overhearing them as he comes back into the room*)

I'd not be taking chances on it.

MRS. WEST

If you get your living in the streets, it's bad chances you're taking.

BRADY

Right you are. There's a bad spot in the best of us and a good spot in the worst of us—

HIGGINS (*with a grin*)

As the poetess says in the evening paper.

BRADY

And 'tis a gamble which is going to have the biggest chance to spread.

HIGGINS

I'd put my money on the bad spot every time.

MRS. WEST

'Tis only the bad you have an eye for.

HIGGINS

Be that as it may, Mrs. West, 'tis O'Rourke'll speak to the clerk himself and fix up that little matter for you.

MRS. WEST

'Twas the least you could do for her, considering you're the cause of her being here.

HIGGINS

And how do you make that out, Mrs. West?

MRS. WEST

Was there no old-timer you could be running in?

'Twill do you good to be of some use in the world.

HIGGINS (*with extravagant irony*)
Maybe you'd like to help his Honour try the case—

MRS. WEST
Don't be wasting the little wit you have. 'Twas small of you to be running in a harmless creature like Mary Kennedy.

HIGGINS
Then let it be a lesson to her to behave like a Christian and not be screeching her head off at one o'clock in the morning.

MRS. WEST
It's quiet as a lamb she is now.

HIGGINS
'Tis me that's up to their tricks. The quiet kind's always the worst when they're after drinking too much for themselves.

(*Raucous laughter and shrill singing float in from the cells.*)

BRADY
Sure the other woman's making up for her. That tall woman's a corker I tell you.

HIGGINS
And she so fat and jolly looking!

BRADY (*sententiously*)
It takes all kinds to make the world.

MRS. WEST
Why was she screeching—this Mary Kennedy?

HIGGINS

She was having a free fight in front of Doolan's Cafe.

MRS. WEST

Who was she fighting with?

HIGGINS

With a man, of course—which is to say: herself was doing the fighting.

MRS. WEST (*contemptuously*)

That's likely . . . What was the matter?

HIGGINS

Yelling like mad: "Give me my money back!" —and then a fine fancy name to top off with.

MRS. WEST

No doubt it didn't come amiss.

HIGGINS

Be that as it may—she up and bangs away at him with both her small fists, screeching like mad: "Give me my money back!" P-h-e-w!

MRS. WEST

And for that little thing you run her in.

HIGGINS

A little thing you call it—disturbing the public peace?

MRS. WEST

Had you not been on hand—which is no less than a miracle—he'd a settled her case out of court all right.

HIGGINS

Be that as it may—I done my duty.

MRS. WEST

A brave man you are, Michael Higgins, to run in the girl and let the man go scot-free.

HIGGINS (*with grand irony*)

To be only a man, Mrs. West, is not yet sufficient grounds for arrest.

MRS. WEST

Be off with you, Higgins; I'm bringing her in here now.

(*Higgins goes out slowly; he stands just beyond the threshold waiting while Mrs. West goes out the rear door and brings in Mary Kennedy, a slender, handsome girl of 19 or 20 with large brown eyes which, despite a certain frankness in their gaze, have acquired a habit of wandering furtively. She has small mobile features now pallid and relaxed. Her wavy brown hair, touched with red, is disordered. Slowly Higgins walks away, still looking back at the girl.*)

MRS. WEST

Sit down and drink a good hot cup of tea.

(*The girl sits down forlornly and drops her head on her arm against the table.*)

MRS. WEST (*sharply, setting the tea on the table before the girl*)

Now that'll do for you; brace up and drink this.

BRADY (*appears in doorway*)

Higgins not here?

(*Mrs. West shakes her head; Brady disappears. The girl raises her head, mops her eyes and blows her nose; catches sight of the looking-glass across the room and cranes her neck in the effort to see herself.*)

MARY KENNEDY (*lifting the teacup*)
You're awful kind. (*She sips the tea slowly, dropping the spoon from time to time to wipe the tears from her eyes.*)

MRS. WEST
You'll have your face spoiled altogether—and his Honour the Judge soon seeing you.

(*The girl cranes her neck to look into the glass again, smooths back her hair and sits up very straight.*)

MRS. WEST (*watching the girl take her tea*)
Is there sugar enough for you?

MARY KENNEDY
Yes. It's all right—very nice.

(*Higgins walks in and crosses over to them.*)

MRS. WEST
Didn't you see the door as you came in?

HIGGINS (*laughing*)
'Twas open and I missed it altogether.

MRS. WEST
I'll keep it closed hereafter.

(*She gets up and walks toward the door; Higgins following her slowly, his eyes fixed on Mary Kennedy.*)

HIGGINS (*at the door, to the matron in a low tone*)
A pretty girl in her right senses.

MRS. WEST (*in the same tone*)
If that's your business with me, you'd better be looking up Brady. He's asking for you.

HIGGINS (*grinning*)
'Twas Brady I came in to see.

MRS. WEST
You're looking for him in the wrong place.

(*When Higgins disappears the girl gives a deep sigh of mingled dread and relief.*)

MARY KENNEDY
I thought it was me he wanted.

MRS. WEST
Well, it can't be long now.

MARY KENNEDY (*looking at herself*)
If I had a little powder—my nose is so red.

MRS. WEST
Give it a rest for a while. Wait—I'll get your bag.

(*She goes out. The girl stands before the looking-glass, adjusts her collar, arranges her hair. Mrs. West brings in the girl's hat, wrap, and handbag.*)

MRS. WEST
Here you are. (*She gives the handbag to Mary Kennedy and lays the hat and coat on the chair.*)

MARY KENNEDY
Oh, thank you! (*She opens the bag, takes out*

a vanity box and a piece of chamois, dips the chamois into the powder and rubs it over her face. There is a rap at the door. Mary Kennedy stops in the act of putting powder on her nose.)

BRADY
Has Higgins—?

MRS. WEST
He's not here.

BRADY
There's a man asking after him.

MRS. WEST (*showing annoyance*)
He's not around here, Brady.

(*Brady disappears. Mary Kennedy proceeds to powder her nose.*)

MRS. WEST
When you're ready, sit down here and wait till it's time.

MARY KENNEDY
Will it be long?

MRS. WEST
It can't be long; it's a quarter to nine now.

MARY KENNEDY
Oh! . . .

MRS. WEST
Don't be nervous; it's soon over with. Too bad for you—all this trouble!

MARY KENNEDY
Yes.

MRS. WEST (*drawing her out*)
How did it all happen?

MARY KENNEDY
Do you mean—my—being—here?

MRS. WEST
What should I be meaning?

MARY KENNEDY
Well—I don't know—exactly.

MRS. WEST
A nice decent girl like you!

MARY KENNEDY
Me? (*She smiles with light self-contempt.*)

MRS. WEST
What was it brought you here?

MARY KENNEDY
Oh, I had a little trouble with a friend of mine.

MRS. WEST
And they run you both in?

MARY KENNEDY (*looking at Mrs. West sharply*)
They didn't run him in.

MRS. WEST
A man?

MARY KENNEDY
Sure he's a man.

MRS. WEST
What was the trouble?

MARY KENNEDY
Well, er—we were having some supper, you know—and—a few drinks—and I gave Jo a bill to pay the waiter—and—

MRS. WEST
You're free with your money. It was himself should have paid for a lady's supper.

MARY KENNEDY
Yes. (*She smiles knowingly as one who sees through a joke.*)

MRS. WEST
And. Well?

MARY KENNEDY (*as though anxious to be done with her story*)
He kept the change—that's all.

MRS. WEST
That's a fine friend for you.

MARY KENNEDY
Oh, Jo had it in for me, all right.

MRS. WEST
Sure, Officer Higgins didn't run you in just for losing your money.

MARY KENNEDY
I wanted my money. I raised a row. (*She drops her elbows on the table, leans her face against her hands a minute, then sits up.*) Now I'm dead broke and sick as a dog.

MRS. WEST (*going up to her*)
You were drunk. That's about the size of it. Have another cup?

MARY KENNEDY (*gulps down the lump that rises in her throat*)
No . . . thank you.

MRS. WEST
How much money was coming to you?

MARY KENNEDY
Well—it was all I got last night.

MRS. WEST (*pretending not to understand*)
Oh! . . . So you work—nights?

MARY KENNEDY (*incredulous of the matron's pretended innocence*)
Why—you—

MRS. WEST
And what do you do?

MARY KENNEDY
Why . . . I . . .

(*The sound of women's laughter, shrill and maudlin, comes to them in the silence of Mary Kennedy's pause.*)

MARY KENNEDY (*looks away from the matron, nods in the direction from which the laughter comes*)
What the other women do—*you* know—

MRS. WEST
You don't mean—?

MARY KENNEDY (*quickly*)
Yes, I do.

MRS. WEST
And you so young and innocent-looking.

MARY KENNEDY (*with a bitter little laugh*)
Think so? Me?

MRS. WEST
Yes. 'Tis misleading—your looks.

MARY KENNEDY (*surveys herself in the glass*)
I guess I look rotten today.

MRS. WEST
The tea's put a little life into you.

MARY KENNEDY (*dully*)
Yes?

MRS. WEST (*comes up closer to the girl*)
Why don't you be decent?

MARY KENNEDY
What can I do?

MRS. WEST
Have you ever tried?

MARY KENNEDY
It was the same thing, whatever I did. The men wouldn't let me alone.

MRS. WEST
Don't be putting it off on the men.

MARY KENNEDY (*under her breath*)
It's so—just the same.

MRS. WEST
What was to hinder you? There's thousands of poor girls earning a decent living.

MARY KENNEDY (*doggedly*)
It's the men—all the same.

MRS. WEST
That's what they all say.

MARY KENNEDY
Well, it's true.

MRS. WEST
Always the same story!

MARY KENNEDY (*scornfully*)
Oh, yes, I know—the men try to get out of it . . . As though a girl *liked* to walk the streets!

MRS. WEST
What kind of a home did you come from?

MARY KENNEDY
Home!—Well, if you call it that!

MRS. WEST
What was the matter?

MARY KENNEDY
My father was no good.

MRS. WEST
How, no good?

MARY KENNEDY
He was drunk all the time. When I was fourteen I had to go to work in a canning factory—

MRS. WEST
Here?

MARY KENNEDY
No. In Chicago. I was born and raised there.

MRS. WEST
And your mother?

MARY KENNEDY
She couldn't help herself.

MRS. WEST
So *she* wasn't bad to you?

MARY KENNEDY
She's always been good to me; but she couldn't help herself.

MRS. WEST
Why couldn't you get along with your father?

MARY KENNEDY
He did nothing but raise a row. I never could please him. After a while—(*There is a sound of footsteps. Mary Kennedy waits till they die away.*) After a while I got tired of trying.

MRS. WEST
I suppose you wanted a good time.

MARY KENNEDY
Well, it would be a lie to say that I didn't; every girl does.

MRS. WEST (*bringing her back to her story*)
Yes. So you got tired—

MARY KENNEDY
And I quit.

MRS. WEST
You quit?

MARY KENNEDY
Yes, I left home.

MRS. WEST
Was it then you went wrong?

MARY KENNEDY
No. I kept on with my work at the canning factory . . . I used to see my mother on the quiet and help her—what little I could. She went out—day's work, washing and ironing, cleaning—anything she could get—

MRS. WEST
Where were you staying all the while?

MARY KENNEDY
With a friend.

MRS. WEST (*suspiciously*)
Oh! . . . A friend!

MARY KENNEDY
A girl—it was. (*Answering Mrs. West's look.*) She was a decent girl all right—married to a motorman—six months. After a while I was taken sick and my mother wanted me home. . . . But I couldn't stay home on account of my father. I went to the Cook County Hospital. When I got better, I thought I could stand it at home for a little while, maybe—

my mother was so anxious—and I went back. I wasn't strong enough to go to work yet, but one evening I went over to see the friend I'd been stopping with: my father came in drunk and waited up for me . . . I hated him!

MRS. WEST
Your own father!

MARY KENNEDY
It's not my fault that I had a drunken beast for a father.

MRS. WEST
And what happened then?

MARY KENNEDY
He called me out of my name—and hit me. Then I cleared out. Ma followed me. She was crying . . . But he shut the door in my face . . . I didn't care what happened. I didn't care a da—. (*She breaks off.*) I was desperate—(*Slipping back into the mood of her memories.*) Once I thought of jumping in the river. I didn't know what to do. I walked and walked. When I came to myself, I was down on the lake front close to the Illinois Central, walking toward the depot. Perhaps I thought I could sit all night in the waiting-room. Or perhaps—well, I don't remember now. I couldn't go back to the place I'd been staying before—(*Suddenly she turns reticent as though just recovering the sense of her surroundings.*)

MRS. WEST
Why couldn't you?

MARY KENNEDY
The friend I'd been staying with—her—husband—

MRS. WEST
Yes? Well—her husband?

MARY KENNEDY
He was too free with me. I couldn't tell her—she'd been so good to me, taking me in because she was sorry for me. Then—anyhow—what could she do?

MRS. WEST
Leave him.

MARY KENNEDY
She couldn't leave him.

MRS. WEST
Why not?

MARY KENNEDY
She was expecting her first.

MRS. WEST
One child by the likes of such a man is better than two.

MARY KENNEDY
Well—she loved him.

MRS. WEST
I never could make it out—these creatures with no spirit in them!

MARY KENNEDY
Spirit! I had plenty, all right—and look at me!

MRS. WEST (*eager to get the whole story*)
Well—the night your father put you out?

MARY KENNEDY
I met a man coming out of the depot.

MRS. WEST
How old were you then?

MARY KENNEDY
Sixteen.

MRS. WEST
It happens to older girls; still—that's no excuse; you were old enough to know better.

MARY KENNEDY
He was real good to me for a long time.

MRS. WEST (*sneering*)
Good to you!

MARY KENNEDY
Yes, he was good to me—but he couldn't help himself; he was married.

MRS. WEST
It's the married men are the worst.

MARY KENNEDY
He was afraid his wife would find out, and so—he gave me some money and left me. Then my father died—and—(*very rapidly*) my mother took care of the baby.

MRS. WEST
The baby! God help us!

MARY KENNEDY
Yes, Pa couldn't die while I was decent. He had to wait till it was too late.

MRS. WEST
Poor thing! What did you do?

MARY KENNEDY
I got a place in the Fair and kept it till I *had* to leave.

MRS. WEST
Had to—?

MARY KENNEDY
Well—anybody could see—

MRS. WEST
Oh, yes,—of course!

MARY KENNEDY
Anyhow I didn't earn anything; half the girls don't earn enough to buy the clothes on their backs.

MRS. WEST
They've no need to be following the fashions.

MARY KENNEDY
What can you do? You have to look all right or you can't hold down your job. The wages wouldn't pay for your clothes. (*Anxiously*) Isn't it soon time now?

MRS. WEST
Don't be nervous. It'll be all over in a few minutes . . . Your baby—is it alive?

MARY KENNEDY
He's three years old now.

MRS. WEST
And where do you keep him?

MARY KENNEDY
With my mother.

MRS. WEST
You're lucky to have a mother.

MARY KENNEDY
Ma's too old to go out working now. Every week I send money—

MRS. WEST

Does she know how you earn it?

MARY KENNEDY

She thinks I'm working in a department store now . . . Well, I was—once—till I was fired —because I wouldn't make a date with—a —floorwalker. That was a long time ago.

MRS. WEST

A married man, too, I suppose?

MARY KENNEDY

I believe so.

MRS. WEST

What's the world coming to—God help us! Well—couldn't you get another place?

MARY KENNEDY

Jo lost me my next job; he was jealous of me.

MRS. WEST

Jo! He's the man made the trouble?

MARY KENNEDY

Yes.

MRS. WEST

Why did you give him your money? What's he got to do with you? (*After a painful silence.*) You care for him—for a man that would let you be run in?

MARY KENNEDY (*turning away*)

Yes.

MRS. WEST

God help us! I don't see why . . . You poor thing!

(*Mary Kennedy moves about restlessly. She goes to the looking-glass.*)

MARY KENNEDY

Gee, but I look rotten! If I ever get out of this, I'll fix myself up. I saw some dandy Spring suits in Regal and Company's window yesterday—cheap, too.

MRS. WEST (*harshly, shocked by the girl's detachment*)

So, that's all you have on your mind, eh—your clothes?

(*Mary Kennedy, too inarticulate to put herself right with the matron, begins to cry again.*)

MRS. WEST

Don't take on so; don't spoil your eyes crying again.

MARY KENNEDY

What'll they do to me?

MRS. WEST

A fine, perhaps.

MARY KENNEDY

I've got some junk I could hock—in the room—some rings and bracelets and things.

MRS. WEST

His Honour won't be hard on you—if this is your first time. (*She searches the girl's face. Mary Kennedy remains silent.*) Haven't you any friends but—this—Jo?

MARY KENNEDY

No . . . just Jo!

MRS. WEST

Why don't you save up your money and go back home to your mother and your baby?

MARY KENNEDY

Yes, I see myself saving a whole lot with Jo.

MRS. WEST

So!—You're keeping him.

MARY KENNEDY

I have to fight every week for the little I'm sending them now . . . Sometimes I think they'd be better off dead—

MRS. WEST

Your own flesh and blood!

MARY KENNEDY

Then it wouldn't matter any longer what happened to me.

MRS. WEST

You—on the streets! And him, taking your money!

MARY KENNEDY (*desperately*)

Him! (*With a hard little laugh.*) He'd take the clothes off my back and soak them for a drink; he'd steal the coppers off my dead eyes to pay for a pack of cigarettes. . . . The rotten sneak! Having me run in! I'll get even with him—I'll get even with him yet.

MRS. WEST

Get rid of him.

MARY KENNEDY

Rid of him! You don't know. I'd go to the Island—I'd go clear to hell to get rid of him. (*Hopelessly*) What's the use? If they send me up, he'll be waiting on the dock to get me back on my job—if 'twas only the price of a square meal.

(*Officer Higgins opens the door and sticks his head in.*)

HIGGINS (*to Mary Kennedy*)
Now, Miss.

(*Mary Kennedy very much disturbed, gets up and hurriedly puts on her hat and wrap. She takes a last look at herself in the glass as Brady appears in the doorway.*)

MARY KENNEDY (*surreptitiously powdering her nose. To the matron*)
I thought I had a veil—(*She looks through her bag.*)

HIGGINS (*taking a few steps into the room*)
You've no call to be covering your face. There's some now 'twould be a kindness to cover.

MARY KENNEDY (*at these words drops her bag, confused, and turns to the matron*)
Goodbye—if I don't see you again.

MRS. WEST (*presses the girl's hand encouragingly*)
Goodbye . . .

(*Brady steps back out of sight, as Higgins leads Mary Kennedy out. In her excitement she forgets to pick up her bag.*)

BRADY (*comes in slowly*)
She's out of wind at last—that fat one—sung herself hoarse . . . (*He looks down at the chair.*) This one here's left her bag. (*He picks it up and lays it on the table.*)

MRS. WEST (*preoccupied*)
Why is it, I wonder—what Higgins said—

that the word of such women is not taken in Court?

BRADY (*pompously*)
The truth's not to be had from them . . . 'Tis a fact, Mrs. West.

MRS. WEST
But anything in the shape of a man—its word's to be taken?

BRADY
A man must tell the truth under oath, Mrs. West.

MRS. WEST
As if the men couldn't beat women lying any day!

BRADY
You're a great one for a joke, Mrs. West . . . Well—it takes all kinds to make the world. The likes of that girl—(*pointing to Mary Kennedy's bag*) would be looking in glasses and powdering their noses, if 'twas a dance or his Honour they was going to.

MRS. WEST
It's not the powder and paint I mind. Did you look at the two eyes of her? It's there her trouble shows.

BRADY
Sure her trade's her worst trouble.

MRS. WEST
Do you think it's herself she's gone on the street for? It's a child and a mother she's keeping.

BRADY
Well, well, look at that now! It beats all the stories they tell you.

MRS. WEST
And she so young!

(*Mary Kennedy comes back accompanied by Jo Prindell, a man of 30 with a handsome but dissolute face, weak rather than hard. He is dressed in the extreme of the immediate fashion.*)

PRINDELL (*arrested on the threshold by sounds from the cells. To Mary Kennedy*)
I say, girlie, this place is just about the limit for noise.

MARY KENNEDY
They do raise a racket.

(*Mrs. West comes forward.*)

MARY KENNEDY (*to Prindell*)
Here she is, Jo. (*To Mrs. West*) My gentleman friend—Mr. Jo Prindell.

(*Prindell takes Mrs. West's hand; she is impassive.*)

PRINDELL (*to Mrs. West*)
No picnic, I guess, your job.

MRS. WEST (*to Mary Kennedy*)
Did you know you'd left your bag?

MARY KENNEDY
Yes, I missed it right away.

(*The matron gives her the bag.*)

PRINDELL (*ostentatiously pulls out a handsome watch and looks at the time. Volubly*)
Guess the little girl's got me cinched for the day all right. Tumbled out and got busy early, I did. (*To Mary Kennedy*) I wasn't going back on you at this stage of the game—not much, girlie. (*He grins at the girl. She smiles back, a deprecatory but wistful smile.*) I looked around and raked a bunch of stuff together—for our uncle. (*He winks significantly.*) Enough of the boodle to last the day out all right, all right. (*He displays a roll of bills.*)

MARY KENNEDY (*a bit sullenly, looking at his diamond ring*)
You've got your solitaire yet.

PRINDELL
Well, that's my little pile, girlie.

MARY KENNEDY
Where's the pawn ticket?

PRINDELL
That's all right, I hocked this junk—didn't I?

MARY KENNEDY
But it's mine.

PRINDELL
Sure it's yours. (*He sees Brady watching him stolidly, takes a cigar from his pocket, offers it to Brady.*) Here, Doc—have one on me.

BRADY (*takes the cigar, observes its quality*)
I will that.

PRINDELL (*to Mary Kennedy*)
Come along now, girlie, we'll make a day of it—a regular blowout; let's take a run to Old

Coney. (*He leads the way out, waves his hat jauntily.*) So long!

MARY KENNEDY
Goodbye!

MRS. WEST
Goodbye! (*Then—on an impulse*) Don't come again.

(*Suddenly Mary Kennedy turns away from Prindell and kisses the matron's cheek. Before Mrs. West recovers from her astonishment the girl darts back and the couple is out of sight.*

Mrs. West and Brady stand in silence for a space as though lost in reverie.)

MRS. WEST (*breaking out suddenly*)
And what do you think of that, now—him running her in and then pawning her own things to pay her fine with! Did you see the big diamond he was sporting?

BRADY
I did that.

MRS. WEST
I'll bet she never sees the things he pawned again.

BRADY
He'll likely sell the pawn ticket.

MRS. WEST
And she thinking it grand of him to come for her! What do you think of that, now?

BRADY
I think nothing at all of it; I'm well used to it.

MRS. WEST

And if I were to stay here a hundred years, I'd never get used to it. The likes of that girl! . . . And there's nothing the poor things can do!

BRADY (*with a grim smile*)

Sure—they can die all right. (*There is another burst of hysterical laughter from the cells.*) Well, it takes all kinds to make the world.

(*Brady walks slowly out of the room, Mrs. West sits brooding.*)

CURTAIN

THE COST OF A HAT

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

In the order of their appearance

AGNES O'CONNOR

SHEILA O'CONNOR

PATRICK O'CONNOR

TIM DONAHUE

PLACE: Hell's Kitchen, New York City.

TIME: The present day.

THE COST OF A HAT

SCENE

The kitchen of the O'Connor flat in a tenement house. The range is old. The chairs are rickety. An old drop-leaf table is covered with checkered oil-cloth. Worn oil-cloth is on the floor. The kitchen shelf over the sink holds canisters, bottles, a pressed glass dish and a broken vase.

MRS. O'CONNOR (*stops ironing as Sheila comes in carrying a large paper bag*)
And what have you there in your bag, Sheila?

SHEILA (*carefully puts down the bag*)
Sure, I'll show you after a while, Ma.

MRS. O'CONNOR (*holds up the muslin frock she has just finished ironing*)
Done at last—glory be!

SHEILA (*smiles her thanks*)
You made a fine job of it, Ma.

MRS. O'CONNOR
And a hard job it was. The clothes are stickin' to my back as though 'twas myself was sprinkled for the ironin'.

SHEILA
Why don't you ever take it easy, Ma? I wouldn't be needing to put on the dress for an hour yet.

MRS. O'CONNOR

'Tis best to be getting it out of the way before your pa comes in.

SHEILA

Sure he knows my clothes has to be ironed.

MRS. O'CONNOR

But 'tis himself'd be suspicious—me ironin' ruffles late of a Saturday afternoon, and know the dress for a new one. 'Tis himself keeps a sharp eye on the clothes you do be wearin'.

SHEILA

He'll most likely be too full to take notice.

MRS. O'CONNOR

Don't speak disrespectful of your pa, Sheila. A hard workin' man has a good right to a clean house and quiet.

SHEILA (*in an ironical tone*)

Quiet?

MRS. O'CONNOR

Sure, the master of the house has the right to make a little noise; 'tis only nature—after a hard week's work.

SHEILA

Pa can behave himself when he tries. You work all week—and Sunday, too, and you never get drunk.

MRS. O'CONNOR

Somebody had to keep straight.

SHEILA

And what did you ever get out of it—keeping straight—poor Ma?

MRS. O'CONNOR

'Tis not what I get out of it now, but what I'm goin' to get when you and Tim settles down together, and Tim foreman at Regal's place.

SHEILA (*after a moment*)

Ma—have you ever took notice how much Tim's like Pa sometimes?

MRS. O'CONNOR

Sure they're both men together. A man must have his fling. Try the potatoes, Sheila, that they don't be goin' to pieces on me in the pot. (*She picks up a cooking-fork and bends over a saucepan.*) Sure the sparrowgrass is rare tender, but 'tis a bit of cabbage suits your pa best.

(*Sheila lifts the pot cover and tries the potatoes; she puts back the cover and lays down the cooking-fork.*)

SHEILA

They're hard as rocks yet. (*She watches her mother meditatively as Mrs. O'Connor puts the irons to cool and carries the ironing board into a kind of pantry, at the left, back.*) Ma,—when you was a girl—did you have a good time?

MRS. O'CONNOR (*raises the outer leaf of the table, spreads a red and white cloth over the worn oil-cloth*)

I hadn't your chances, Sheila. A girl out at service has only the kitchen. You have a home of your own.

SHEILA

You've done your best for me, Ma . . . If only

Pa'd cut out the booze! If . . . (*She breaks off.*)

MRS. O'CONNOR

I mind well the first time I met your pa, Sheila. 'Twas at the Hibernian picnic over on Elk's Point. We danced together—and he asked me for the pleasure of seein' me home—me not long here from the old country, workin' for three dollars a week—and himself earnin' good Union wages. A gay young buck he was—and that's no lie—as like to Tim Donahue as two peas in a pod. The girls was all crazy about him—'twas a way he had.

SHEILA (*smiles skeptically*)

Had he, Ma?

MRS. O'CONNOR

And the muscles of him! I thought 'twould be fine and grand to mind the house with a brave young buck like Pat O'Connor to fend for me.

SHEILA

I'm thinking you was easy satisfied, Ma.

MRS. O'CONNOR

He's lost his figger, but he's kept his looks.

SHEILA

When did Pa take to boozing?

MRS. O'CONNOR

Sure, 'tis not so long ago, you was old enough to remember. But boozin's a hard name for it, Sheila.

SHEILA

As far back as I can remember Pa's always had a jag on of a Saturday night.

MRS. O'CONNOR

'Twas the disappointment over Patsy drove him to it. We made sure of Patsy's help and a bit of land on Long Island with a shanty of our own in our old age, and, after the good schoolin'—till fourteen—and a year in the business college to make a gentleman out of him—Patsy goes to the bad—God rest his soul! (*She wipes her eyes on her apron.*)

SHEILA

Who drove him to it, Ma? Who drove him to it? Pa.

MRS. O'CONNOR (*in a voice of yearning*)

Patsy was like me.

SHEILA (*half-affectionately, half-contemptuously*)

Yes—easy-going!

MRS. O'CONNOR (*rocks her body to and fro*)

His body's in Calvary and his soul's with the blessed saints . . . I'm bidin' my time. (*Muttering*) Mary, Mother of God . . .

SHEILA (*puts her arms around her mother*)

I'm not the comfort Patsy was to you, Ma—and —(*bitterly*) I'm only a girl.

MRS. O'CONNOR

You can't be blamed for that, Sheila, and your father's hard on you for it.

SHEILA (*passionately*)

I never asked to be born at all, did I? If I had, God knows I wouldn'ta asked to be a man—to marry a pretty girl—you musta been a pretty girl, Ma—and—look at you, Ma—you don't care how you dress—and Pa don't care—and you wash and iron and cook and mend—

MRS. O'CONNOR

I was brought up to that.

SHEILA

Yes, but you got wages. What do you get now?

MRS. O'CONNOR

I'm doin' for my own now; that's wages enough.

SHEILA

Yes, fine wages—wearing yourself out like an old rag!

MRS. O'CONNOR

Well-a-day, Sheila Monica, that you may never have worse luck!

SHEILA

What'd you put up with it for—all these years?

MRS. O'CONNOR

That you may learn patience from her blessed name! 'Twas that or the wash tub, Sheila; you wouldn't have your poor old mother always over the tubs. Though I'm not sayin' I wouldn't put up with worse luck for the sake of your pa.

SHEILA

Why, Ma, why?

MRS. O'CONNOR (*turning aside*)

Do you mind what love is, my girl?

SHEILA (*disdainfully*)

Love! . . . Where does the love come in?

MRS. O'CONNOR

Don't I belong to him?

SHEILA

Sure, you belong to him—like an old shoe. He can kick you on and off as he has a mind. I'd

sooner belong to myself. (*Broodingly*) Tim's getting more and more like Pa. 'Tis this working in politics doing it.

MRS. O'CONNOR

Don't be goin' against Tammany, Sheila. Sure your father's a Tammany man to the heart and the soul of him. And why not? 'T'as made him what he is today.

SHEILA

Sure it has that. And 'tis making Tim like him—more and more—every day. There's too much treating in politics . . . Tim's getting fatter. He never used to be so red in the face . . .

MRS. O'CONNOR

'Tis the sunburn.

SHEILA

Sure the only sun he sees nowadays is the lights in Mike Cassidy's saloon. But 'tis a good load he can carry, for I never laid eyes on him drunk yet.

(*Sheila takes her new hat out of the paper bag. The bill for the hat drops to the floor. She picks it up and thrusts it back into the bag. The hat is cheaply modish, a little showy but not vulgar.*)

SHEILA (*stands before an old mirror on the wall and tries on the hat*)

Look, Ma, ain't it a beauty?

(*Mrs. O'Connor loses herself in admiration for a minute—then—*)

MRS. O'CONNOR (*anxiously*)
If your pa should be comin' in this blessed minute—

SHEILA
'Tis like him to begrudge me the clothes on my back.

MRS. O'CONNOR
'Tis the rheumatism riles your pa. 'Tis the same with myself. The wash'll be the death of me some day.

SHEILA
Sure if I had the time, I'd look after my own clothes.

MRS. O'CONNOR
'Tis thankful I am that I have the strength left in me to be doin' that little for you.

SHEILA
I mind how good you are to me, Ma. Because I'm holding my tongue from one day's end to the next, don't think that I'm blind to it all—you slaving away—and Pa spending my wages.

MRS. O'CONNOR
'Tis no use goin' against him, Sheila. (*She looks at the hat apprehensively.*) Put it away, girl, put the hat away.

SHEILA
You like it, Ma?

MRS. O'CONNOR
Grand! Sure anything is becoming to you, Sheila. (*Lowering her voice*) How much did it cost you?

SHEILA

Five dollars. I bought it at a good place, Ma.

MRS. O'CONNOR (*aghast*)

Five dollars?

SHEILA

Some girls have all their money to spend and not one cent board to pay at all.

MRS. O'CONNOR (*gently protesting*)

That bit of board, Sheila . . .

SHEILA

But what does it go for? Rushing the growler. What good does it do you at all?

MRS. O'CONNOR

Ah, well-a-day, a friendly glass or two of a Saturday evenin' now and then—in company with your pa!

SHEILA

Ma . . . if Pa should find out that I'm getting a raise in my wages?

MRS. O'CONNER

No, no, he'd be raisin' the price of your board.

SHEILA

If I have to give more, I might better be keeping myself. There's many a good place where I could be getting room and board for less.

MRS. O'CONNOR (*worried*)

Sheila, Sheila, you wouldn't be leavin' us till you set up for yourselves, you and Tim? (*She listens tensely.*) Your pa's comin'.

(*She grabs Sheila's hat and thrusts it back into the bag as Patrick O'Connor comes in. He has*

twinkling brown eyes, iron-grey hair, an irascible nose, a sensitive mouth and a square jaw.)

O'CONNOR (*throws himself into a chair and stares at them aggressively*)
Well?

MRS. O'CONNOR
You must be fair dead from hunger; sure, everything's ready . . .

SHEILA (*breaks in*)
Would you mind waiting a bit? Tim's coming.

(*O'Connor takes out his pipe and fills it, pressing the tobacco deep into the bowl with his right thumb and forefinger.*)

O'CONNOR (*not looking at either of them*)
Gimme a match.

(*Mrs. O'Connor hurries to fetch matches. He strikes one; it goes out; he throws it down and strikes another; it goes out; he throws it down and strikes the last match; it, too, goes out and he flings it down in a rage.*)

O'CONNOR (*looking at his wife*)
A match, old woman.

SHEILA
Ma, you mind the dinner.

(*Sheila fetches more matches, strikes one and holds it over his pipe. He looks at her with the combativeness of a man who feels a thirst. She faces him pluckily. His mouth softens as he looks*

at her. He considers that Sheila inherits her pluck—the quality he respects most—from him. He pulls at his pipe and settles back in his chair. His hat is still on his head.)

O'CONNOR (*to Sheila in a tone half-proud, half-swagger.*)
If yourself had but the good luck to be born a boy, now!

MRS. O'CONNOR
Ah, Pat—don't!

SHEILA
Hard luck 'twoulda been. (*She tosses her head.*)

O'CONNOR
You mighta been earning men's wages, and me and your ma resting our old bones. What good are you? Sure, you can't even go fetch a pint.

SHEILA (*mutters*)
But I can pay for it all right.

O'CONNOR (*raises his voice and brings his two feet down on the floor with a bang*)
What's that you're muttering?

MRS. O'CONNOR (*timidly*)
Let her alone, Pa, she's a good girl.

O'CONNOR (*gets up suddenly. To Sheila*)
Where's the money?

SHEILA (*muttering again*)
Money! Money! (*She crosses the room and picks up her worn handbag.*)

O'CONNOR
Sure the cost of living's getting higher every day.

MRS. O'CONNOR
Meat's fearful.

O'CONNOR
'Tis high time your wages was raised.

SHEILA
You say that regular—every week.

O'CONNOR
I do, do I? Mind that you don't go stealing the money on me. (*Sheila hands her father the money. He counts it out carefully, then turns on her angrily.*) What call have you to be keeping back half your week's pay?

SHEILA
If I'm to go to work, I must have shoes to walk in.

MRS. O'CONNOR (*in a low voice while O'Connor puts silver into his pocket and the bill into the broken vase on the kitchen shelf*)
Sheila, don't make your pa mad.

O'CONNOR (*turns on his wife*)
Get me a can, and don't be standing there like a daft woman.

SHEILA
Sit yourself down, Ma, I'll get it.

O'CONNOR (*puts on a fierce tone*)
Hey-you-there! . . . giving yourself these damned grand airs! (*With a smile of admiration as Sheila disappears into the pantry, lowering his voice and winking at his wife.*) Smart girl—that!

MRS. O'CONNOR
True for you, Pat.

O'CONNOR
Don't take after you, old woman.

MRS. O'CONNOR
No, Pa, I never was smart—like Sheila.

O'CONNOR
You was good enough, old woman, in your day.

MRS. O'CONNOR (*conciliatingly*)
Tim'll be coming along now soon.

(*Sheila fetches the pail.*)

O'CONNOR
I'll be going for the beer.

MRS. O'CONNOR
Supper'll soon be on the table.

(*He goes out. Mrs. O'Connor looks after the supper. Sheila watches her mother meditatively.*)

MRS. O'CONNOR
Don't make your pa mad, Sheila. 'Tis not the beer I'll be mindin' at all, at all, if it's himself sits at home to drink it. But to go stay in Cassidy's place drinkin' the whiskey till he's fightin' drunk with it—Mary, Mother of God! —I'm gettin' too old for that.

SHEILA
Don't worry, Ma. (*She looks at the clock.*) Tim's slow a-coming.

MRS. O'CONNOR
The clock on the shelf runs wild.

SHEILA
'Tis disgusting the way Rosie Murphy's making

up to Tim Donahue. She's doing her best to get him away from me.

MRS. O'CONNOR

That she may never succeed, but come to grief in the attempt!

SHEILA

Sure there's no green in Tim's eye; he likes style. (*She takes the new hat out of the bag and tries it on again.*)

MRS. O'CONNOR

Sheila! Your pa'll catch you wearin' it and there'll be the devil to pay.

SHEILA

Sure, he needn't know the cost of it.

MRS. O'CONNOR

Wait! Wait! Tim'll be comin' along now. Pa's more soft-spoken—in a way—when there's men-folk around. Put it away, Sheila, girl; he'll be comin' in now and see it.

SHEILA (*suddenly rebellious*)

Let him see it.

MRS. O'CONNOR (*frightened by Sheila's obstinacy*)

No, no, Sheila.

SHEILA

Yes, Ma, that's better than being 'shamed before Tim.

MRS. O'CONNOR

Mary Mother! He'll be smashin' the dishes. 'Tis best to put up with your pa. He'll have his own way—drunk or sober.

SHEILA

Yes, if a body always gives in to him.

MRS. O'CONNOR

Don't be goin' against him now, Sheila. This fightin'! 'Twill be the death of me yet.

SHEILA

You're that soft, Ma . . . Why don't you ever stand up to him once?

MRS. O'CONNOR

Don't be stubborn, Sheila, don't be like your pa.

SHEILA

O Ma, sometimes you make me sick. What's the good of being alive at all.

MRS. O'CONNOR

He's easy-goin' enough if he's not crossed.

SHEILA

Who is he, anyhow—I want to know? The president of the United States, or what? He's just an old—

MRS. O'CONNOR (*stopping Sheila's mouth*)

Sheila, are you out of your senses altogether?

SHEILA

What did you put up with it for, all these years?

MRS. O'CONNOR (*in terrified protest*)

Sheila! Sheila!

SHEILA

'Tis yourself has trained him to it.

MRS. O'CONNOR

S-s-s-h!

(*Mrs. O'Connor tries to put the hat back into the bag. Sheila defiantly pulls it out again.*

The bill for the hat drops to the floor near the kitchen range, unnoticed by either of the women.)

SHEILA

No, no, Ma, give it here. (*Holding the hat.*) No use hiding it . . . I'm going to wear it out tonight, with Tim.

(*O'Connor comes in, puts the pail of beer on the table with great deliberateness and drops into a chair. Mrs. O'Connor fetches him a glass. She watches him with secret suspicion, smells whiskey on his breath and gives Sheila a significant glance.*)

O'CONNOR (*raises his voice*)

My supper!

MRS. O'CONNOR (*looks at Sheila*)

Tim's coming now—

SHEILA

Not till seven o'clock, Ma.

O'CONNOR (*brings his fist down on the table with a thud that makes the dishes rattle*)

Damn Tim Donahue.

SHEILA

You wouldn't be saying that to his face.

O'CONNOR (*grows more enraged with every word he shouts out*)

Don't be uncivil to me, you hussy, or I'll learn you manners . . . I'll lay you out at my feet . . . Mind that now!

MRS. O'CONNOR (*pulls at Sheila's sleeve, speaks in an undertone*)

Sheila! Sheila!

O'CONNOR (*threateningly*)
Don't be tossing your chin in the air at me, Miss.

(*Sheila smiles with quiet scorn.*)

O'CONNOR (*shouts again*)
I'll learn you manners . . .

SHEILA
Pa! . . . I'm not deaf.

O'CONNOR (*makes a sudden move as though to spring at her*)
I'll learn you manners . . . I'll . . . (*His voice trails off into a kind of sullen monotone.*) I'll learn you—with—a—chair. (*He slouches back in his seat and takes another glass of beer.*)

SHEILA
Why don't you take off your hat? You're not in Mike Cassidy's.

MRS. O'CONNOR (*in a frightened undertone*)
Whist, whist! You'll bring a mortal sin on his soul, drivin' him desperate with your sharp tongue.

(*In answer to her mother's fears, Sheila goes boldly up to him and takes off his hat. He raises his arm threateningly, but his expression shows that he has no intention of striking her. On the contrary, her courage has placated him. She lays his hat on the window-sill. He lifts the pail of beer and takes a long drink. He puts the pail down with a bang that spatters the foam.*)

O'CONNOR
My pipe!

SHEILA
In your pocket.

(*Sheila pulls the pipe out of his pocket and holds it before him, smiling.*)

O'CONNOR (*looks steadily at Sheila*)
The two black eyes of her! Sure it might be myself looking out of them—(*he drinks*)—but for the fact—(*smiling back at Sheila*)—that you have the misfortune—(*winks at Mrs. O'Connor*) to be a girl.

(*Sheila picks up her hat and puts it on. O'Connor divides his attention between the beer and the girl, who stands before the mottled looking-glass with affected carelessness. She watches his face in the mirror.*)

O'CONNOR
So, that's what your doing with your wages—wasting them on the likes of such foolishness.

MRS. O'CONNOR (*trying to carry it off lightly*)
Ain't it a grand hat, now, Pat?

O'CONNOR (*contemptuously*)
Faith, I could match it at the ten cent store. And belike it cost you a decent sum now.

(*Silence. Sheila lays the hat down on the paper bag; O'Connor fills his pipe, spilling the tobacco freely*)

O'CONNOR

Grudging your old pa his beer for the likes of that, eh? (*He puts in more tobacco, presses it down into his pipe with his thumb and forefinger.*) How much might it cost you, now?

MRS. O'CONNOR (*hurriedly*)

Sure a trifle . . . She's been savin' her carfare these three months.

O'CONNOR

Wearing out good shoe leather for that! . . . And what did it cost you?

MRS. O'CONNOR (*tries to divert his attention*)

Sure the poor man has no light. (*She fetches matches.*) Here, Pat, here's matches for you—

(*He takes the matches without turning his eyes away from Sheila.*)

O'CONNOR

What did it cost you?

MRS. O'CONNOR (*clattering the pans nervously*)

Tim'll be coming now, any minute.

O'CONNOR

Hold your tongue, Agnes, I'm asking the girl something. (*To Sheila*) What did you pay for it, I'm asking you?

SHEILA (*affecting carelessness*)

A couple of dollars, Pa.

MRS. O'CONNOR

'Twas cheap at the price.

O'CONNOR

Two good dollars—wasted!

SHEILA
I've got a right to have something out of my own earnings.

MRS. O'CONNOR
'Tis mortal hot in this place. (*She opens a window.*)

(*There is a heavy tread in the hall.*)

O'CONNOR (*mutters to himself*)
Two dollars! . . .

(*A knock at the door.*)

SHEILA (*relieved, calls out*)
Come on in, Tim. (*She starts to the door as Tim Donahue opens it and comes into the room.*)

DONAHUE
Good evening to you all.

O'CONNOR
Top of the morning to you and many returns of the day.

SHEILA (*in an undertone*)
'Tis Cassidy's whiskey talking.

MRS. O'CONNOR
Sit you down, Tim.

O'CONNOR (*to Sheila*)
You're up to your old tricks—whispering behind my back. 'Tis the women-folk with their want of sense will drive you to the drink if you've any manhood left in you.

DONAHUE (*stolidly*)
Sure thing!

O'CONNOR

'Tis nothing but foolishness they have on their minds.

(*Sheila starts to pour out a glass of beer for Tim.*)

SHEILA

Pa—have you drunk it all up?

O'CONNOR

I'll be after filling it. (*He gets up.*)

DONAHUE (*takes the pail*)

I'll save you the trouble.

(*Donahue goes out. O'Connor crosses to the kitchen range and empties his pipe, tapping it against the edge of the range. Suddenly Sheila sees the bill for her hat on the floor near her father; involuntarily she starts toward it, sees him watching her, and stops; he notices the slip of paper and her restrained impulse to snatch it; fills his pipe slowly, keeping his eye on her meanwhile.*)

O'CONNOR (*as a look of stealthy menace comes into his eyes*)

Two dollars—did you say?

SHEILA

Two dollars is what I said.

O'CONNOR (*picks up the bill, looks at it, towers over her in his drunken rage*)

You lie—you slut—'Twas five you paid for it.

SHEILA (*with the dead calm of foreknowledge*)

'*Twas* five I paid for it.

(*He picks up the hat and strikes at her. She watches him with a set, white face.*)

O'CONNOR

I'll show you . . . (*He crushes the hat into a shapeless mass.*) To be telling me damned lies—(*He flings the crushed hat in her face.*)

MRS. O'CONNOR

Pat! Pat! (*She picks up the hat and tries to pull it back into shape again.*)

SHEILA

Never mind, Ma, I'll buy me a better one.

O'CONNOR

You will, will you? (*He strikes at Sheila. She steps aside to escape the blow. Mrs. O'Connor puts herself between them*)

O'CONNOR (*following Sheila*)

You'll buy a better one, will you?

SHEILA (*coldly defiant*)

I'll buy me a better one.

(*O'Connor pushes his wife aside and strikes out again, but Mrs. O'Connor catches the blow. Sheila shoves her mother back and faces her father.*)

O'CONNER

Will you now? (*He strikes Sheila in the face.*) Will you? (*He strikes her again, but his drunken fury has spent itself. There is a red welt on Sheila's cheek.*)

MRS. O'CONNOR (*sobbing*)

Mary, Mother of God! How could you, Pat, how could you?

(*He looks at the girl's face and, without a word, walks unsteadily out of the room into the bedroom adjoining.*)

MRS. O'CONNOR (*wipes Sheila's face with a wet cloth*)
'Twas a cruel, cruel blow—that.

SHEILA (*with a sudden desperate gesture, breaks out fiercely*)
'Twill be the last—mind that, Ma,—the last!

(*Tim Donahue comes back with the beer.*)

SHEILA (*to Tim Donahue, pointing to her crushed hat*)
My new hat—ruined!

MRS. O'CONNOR
May God forgive him!

SHEILA (*brokenly*)
Tim!

DONAHUE (*stares at the hat, then at Sheila's cheek. More than half in earnest with a note of patronizing banter*)
Well!—You're a fine-looking sight! Do you think I'll be seen out tonight in company with that? (*He points to the mark on her cheek.*)

MRS. O'CONNOR (*wets the cloth with cold water and holds it to Sheila's face*)
Sure, it'll pass off now in a little while.

SHEILA (*with pitiful appeal*)
I've worked for the clothes I was to be wearing tonight this three months—walked the two feet off of me—when my legs was so tired from the day's work they'd hardly hold me up . . . I'd rather be dead . . . Tim! . . .

DONAHUE
'Tis all your own fault. Why do you go nagging

the old man? He's in the right of it—the women have little sense.

(*Sheila crosses to the window-sill and takes up her old sailor hat.*)

MRS. O'CONNOR (*in a frightened voice, following after the girl*)
Where are you going, Sheila?

SHEILA
Out of this house, Ma.

MRS. O'CONNOR
Where to, Mother of God, where to?

SHEILA (*reassuringly*)
I can look after myself, Ma. No harm'll come to me out of *this* house.

MRS. O'CONNOR
Speak to her, Tim, speak to her.

SHEILA (*scornfully*)
I'm done with the men—(*Her face hardens.*) —the two of them!

MRS. O'CONNOR (*as Sheila crosses to the door*)
Don't! . . . Sheila! . . .

DONAHUE (*steps between Sheila and the door*)
Aw,—take off your hat and have sense.

(*Sheila looks at him with cold contempt.*)

MRS. O'CONNOR (*pleading*)
Come now—like a good girl . . .

DONAHUE
Haven't you the sense to go easy with the old man when he's having a good time? He's your father, ain't he?

SHEILA (*bitterly*)
Father! God help us—he is that.

DONAHUE
D'you want me to split with the old man?

SHEILA
I want nothing of you—Tim Donahue—from this time on.

DONAHUE
Getting ready to go on the stage—or what? (*Sure of himself.*) Serves you right. I might be lamming you myself some fine day— (*He smiles at her.*)

MRS. O'CONNOR
Tim! Tim!

DONAHUE (*grinning*)
Sure—if she went wasting good money—

MRS. O'CONNOR
'Twas her own earnin's, Tim.

SHEILA (*laughs coldly; then almost breathlessly, with burning scorn, breaks out*)
You! . . . And you think I'd tie myself to a thing like you? To lead a life like this! My God! Poor Ma! Pa's not fit to kiss her feet . . . My poor Ma! . . . always doing her best . . . and nothing's ever enough! She stands it. She'll stand it to her dying day. But I've found you out—none too soon—men like you and Pa . . . I'm done with you . . . done with you—both!

DONAHUE
You're talking foolishness. (*He blocks her way and starts to put his arm around her.*)

SHEILA (*retreating a little*)
Don't lay a hand on me.

DONAHUE (*trying to arouse her jealousy*)
I'd better be going to Rosie Murphy's then.

SHEILA
Go to her! Go to her!

DONAHUE
Listen to sense now. (*He takes hold of her arm.*)

SHEILA (*shakes him off fiercely*)
Keep away, I tell you.

MRS. O'CONNOR
Sheila! . . . For love of Tim! . . .

SHEILA
Let him go to her, Rosie Murphy. He can make a fool of her, if she'll let him. Not me! Never again, Tim Donahue!

MRS. O'CONNOR
Sheila girl, have you no love left for him?

SHEILA
No! No! If it's love that's kept you in a hell like this—I'm done with love.

MRS. O'CONNOR (*alarmed*)
You wouldn't be leaving me, Sheila, you wouldn't be leaving your poor old ma. (*She tries to hold the girl back.*)

SHEILA
Don't try to stop me. It's no use, Ma.

MRS. O'CONNOR
Sheila! For love of me! . . .

SHEILA (*at the door*)
Don't you worry, Ma, one fine day I'll be taking you out of all this.

MRS. O'CONNOR (*empties the vase on the kitchen shelf and tries to force the money into Sheila's hand. Sheila refuses it, thereupon her mother tries to put the money into Sheila's bag. Sheila pulls the bag away*)
'Tis your own money, girl.

SHEILA (*with a bitter smile*)
Let him keep it, Ma, to remember me by. (*Her mother clings to her. Sheila kisses her and breaks away. At the door she turns.*) I'll not be forgetting you, Ma.

MRS. O'CONNOR (*as Sheila goes out*)
Stop, Sheila, stop! . . . (*She rocks her body to and fro, wrings her hands.*) Mary Mother!

DONAHUE (*stolidly*)
She'll come back.

MRS. O'CONNOR (*with loud sobs*)
She'll never come back . . . First Patsy . . . now Sheila! (*To O'Connor, who, aroused by her crying, comes in from the adjoining room*) That I had died on the day I first set my two eyes on you—you with no heart in your breast—driving them both out!

O'CONNOR (*half-sobered by the spectacle of her grief, a vague anxiety in his tone*)
Where's she—Sheila?

MRS. O'CONNOR
Gone . . . And she'll never come back.

DONAHUE (*trying to make light of the situation*)
Sure she'll come back.

MRS. O'CONNOR

Never! Never! Sheila's not Patsy—easy-goin' . . . She'll never come back.

DONAHUE (*ashamed in the presence of her helpless agony*)

Sure she will.

MRS. O'CONNOR (*wailing*)

She'll never come back—never—never—not Sheila . . .

O'CONNOR (*starts up as though in mortal terror and calls out*)

Sheila!

MRS. O'CONNOR

Call! . . . You may well call . . . Call them both . . . (*She stretches out her arms as though to draw both her children back to her; her voice is choked with tears.*) Sheila! . . . Sheila! . . . Patsy!

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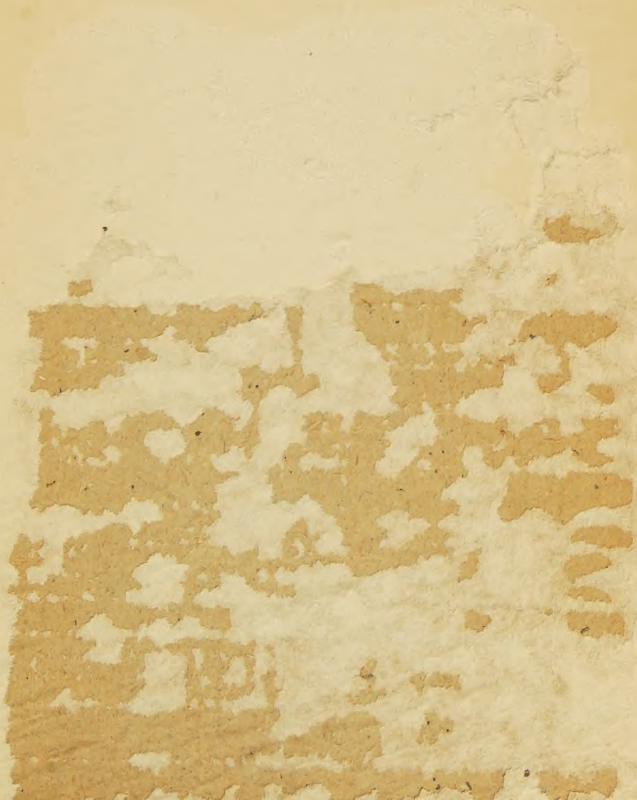

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